NATION

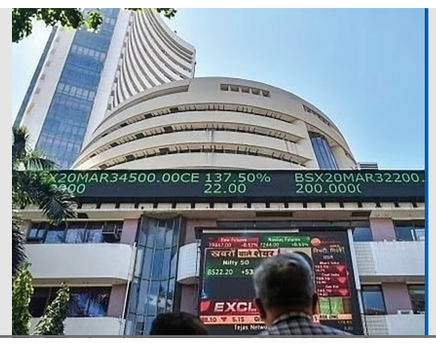
Farmers to offer 36,000 acres under land pooling for Amaravati

≫ Page: 4 ≪

BUSINESS

Mkts extend losses for 3rd day amid broad sell-off

≫ Page: 7 ≪



SPORTS

Gukesh beats Erigaisi

≫ Page: 8 ≪

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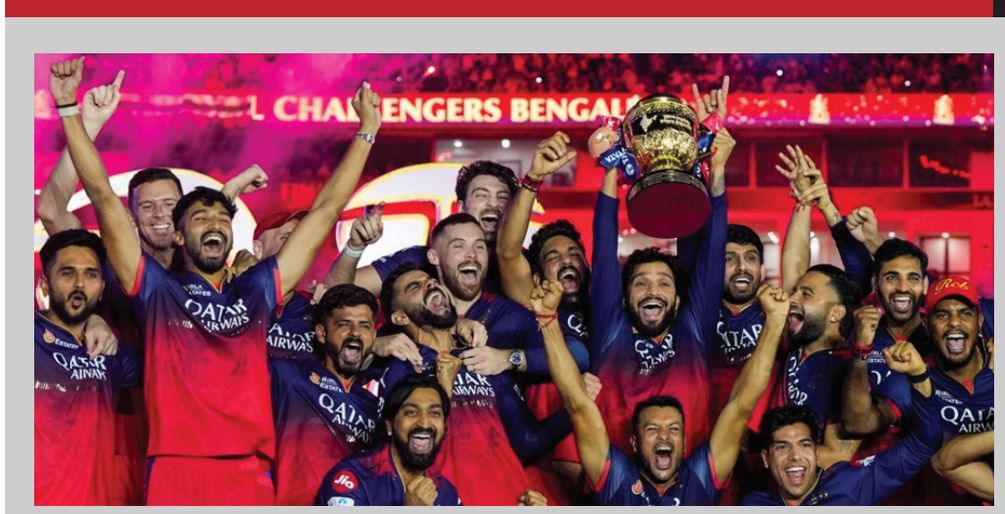
SALAR
DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

Website: salarnews.in | www.magzter.com | 4 JUNE 2025 | WEDNESDAY | BENGALURU | 7 DHU AL-HIJJAH, 1446 AH | Vol 4 | Issue No 151 | Pages: 8

CUP NAMMADE!

- RCB wins IPL after 18 long years by 6 runs
- This is the 2nd IPL finale PBKS is losing



RCB captain Rajat Patidar lifts the championship trophy as players celebrate after winning IPL 2025, at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Tuesday **PHOTO: PTI**

AHMEDABAD, 3 JUNE

Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) ended their 18-year title drought with a six-run win over Punjab Kings in a dramatic IPL final at Ahmedabad on Tuesday night.

Led by Virat Kohli, RCB posted 190/9 after a scratchy batting display. Kohli top-scored with 43 off 35 balls, but none of the other batters could convert their starts. Kyle Jamieson (3/35) and Arshdeep Singh (3/31) kept RCB in check, while Jitesh Sharma's late cameo (24 off 10) provided a late boost.

After a solid powerplay (55/1), RCB's innings lost momentum, adding just 42 runs in the next six overs. Mayank Agarwal (24), Rajat Patidar (26), and Liam Livingstone (25) got starts but failed to push on. Arshdeep's three wickets in the final over restricted RCB just shy of a 200-plus total.

In reply, Punjab's chase stumbled early. Phil Salt took a brilliant boundary catch to dismiss Priyansh Arya, while Krunal Pandya (2/17) and Josh Hazlewood maintained pressure. Romario Shepherd's dismissal of Shreyas Iyer was a key blow.

Despite resistance from Josh Inglis (39) and Prabhsimran Singh (26), Punjab couldn't keep up with the required rate. Bhuvneshwar Kumar's double strike in the 17th over ended any realistic hopes. Shashank Singh's unbeaten 61 off 30 balls provided late drama, but needing 29 off the final over, Punjab fell short. Hazlewood held firm, bowling consecutive dot balls to secure RCB's long-awaited victo-ry. As Kohli lifted the trophy, tears flowed and the long journey from near misses to glory was complete — a night etched forever in RCB's history. Krunal Pandya was adjudged Player of the Match.

— PTI

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> I have given this team my youth, prime and experience. I gave it everything I have
> —Virat Kohli

RCB fans celebrate at BGS Playground in Vijayanagar, Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Lee Jae-myung elected South Korea's Prez

SEOUL, 3 JUNE

Liberal opposition leader Lee Jae-myung has been elected President of South Korea, defeating conservative rival Kim Moon Soo, who conceded early Wednesday. His victory follows months of political turmoil sparked by the brief imposition of martial law by ousted President Yoon Suk Yeol. Lee, a former Gyeonggi governor, won over 48% of votes with more than 86 per cent counted. Nearly 80 per cent of eligible voters participat-ed. Known for his rags-to-riches story, Lee vowed to pursue pragmatic diplomacy, strengthen US-South Ko-rea ties, and address economic inequality. Despite criticism of leaning towards China and North Korea, Lee reaffirmed the US alliance as central. *—PTI*

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Ladakh locals get 85% job quota under domicile rules

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The government on Tuesday introduced new reservation and domicile rules for the Union Territory of Ladakh, reserving 85 per cent jobs for locals and one-third of the total number of seats in the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils for women. The move is aimed at safeguarding local interests as people in Ladakh, who have been protesting for constitutional safeguards to protect their language, culture and land after the special status of the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was abrogated in 2019. The changes in the policies of the reservation in jobs, autonomous councils and domicile will come into effect immediately, according to multiple notifications issued by the government. In October 2024, climate activist Sonam Wangchuk also sat on an indefinite fast in Delhi to press for their demands. *—PTI*

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Haasan refuses to release 'Thug Life' in Karnataka

HC raps Kamal, says free speech can't be used to hurt sentiments

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Actor-filmmaker Kamal Haasan's much-anticipated film 'Thug Life' will not release in Karnataka on 5 June, as originally planned, amid ongoing protests over his remarks about the Kannada.

His production house, Raaj Kamal Films International, informed the Karnataka High Court of the decision during a hearing on Tuesday, as the court said that even freedom of expression does not extend to hurting mass sentiments.

The controversy stems from Haasan's recent statement at a promotional event in Chennai, where he allegedly said that "Kannada was born out of Tamil," triggering widespread backlash in Karnataka. The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) has since refused to allow the film's screening unless Haasan issues an apology.

> It pains me that my statement at the Thug Life audio launch, spoken out of genuine affection for the legendary Dr Rajkumar's family, especially Shiva Rajkumar has been misunderstood and taken out of context
> —Kamal Haasan, Actor

At the hearing, Justice M Nagaprasanna strongly criticised Haasan, questioning, "Are you a historian or a linguist to make such a statement?" and emphasised that "no language is born out of another." The court remarked that a single apology could have resolved the unrest and lamented the absence of even a symbolic expression of regret in Haasan's communication to the KFCC.

Veteran actor and Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) chief Kamal Haasan

The actor's counsel, Senior Advocate Dhyan Chinnappa, argued that Haasan's remarks were misunderstood and not made with malice. "An apology is needed when there is malice, not for a misunderstanding," he said, asserting that Haasan holds a genuine love for the Kannada language. The judge, however, countered that "language is an emotional and cultural identity".

"You want to earn crores from Karnataka, but you won't apologise?" Justice Nagaprasanna questioned, citing historical precedent where leaders like C Rajagopalachari had apologised for similar remarks. The court noted the absence of an apology in Haasan's letter and stated that "only one sentence was to be added" as a gesture of grace. It adjourned the matter to 10 June, allowing time for a dialogue between the filmmakers and the KFCC. The court concluded, "You've created unrest with your statement. Think it over. If you still want to stand by it, we will decide accordingly." *—PTI*

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Not contempt of court if Parliament makes laws: SC

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Supreme Court has said any law made by Parliament or a state legislature cannot be held to contempt of court.

A bench comprising Justices BV Nagarathna and Satish Chandra Sharma made the observation while disposing off a 2012 contempt plea filed by sociologist and former Delhi University professor, Nandini Sundar and others.

The petition contended that there has been contempt of the order as the Chhattisgarh government has legislated the Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Force Act, 2011, authorizing an auxiliary armed force to assist security forces in dealing with Maoist/ Naxal violence, legalising existing SPOs by inducting them and supporting vigilante groups like Salwa Judum.

The state government neither vacated all school buildings and ashrams from the occupation of the security force nor compensated Salwa Judum's victims and SPOs.

The top court said in order to ensure that rule of law permeates to fulfil constitutional objectives of establishing an egalitarian social order, the balance between the respective sovereign functionaries must be d maintained.

The bench outlined the need for "specific steps" to bring peace and rehabilitation in the affected areas through coordinated measures of the state and central governments.

Judiciary is vested with the power to resolve interpretive doubts and disputes about the validity or otherwise of an enacted law by Parliament or any state legislature.

The verdict pointed out that central to the legislative function was the power of the legislative organ to enact and amend laws. *—PTI*

3 J&K govt staffers sacked over terror links with LeT

JAMMU/CHANDIGARH, 3 JUNE

Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday dismissed three government employees for their alleged involvement with proscribed terror outfits Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.

All three are currently lodged in jail.

They were identified as Malik Ishfaq Naseer, a police constable, Ajaz Ahmed, a government teacher and Waseem Ahmad Khan, a junior assistant in government medical college.

Constable Malik allegedly used his position to identify safe drop locations for arms, explosives, and narcotics, and shared GPS coordinates with Pakistani handlers. His brother, Malik Asif was a slain LeT militant.

Ahmed allegedly smuggled arms, ammunition, narcotics and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen propaganda material.

Khan, associated with LeT and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, helped assasinate journalist Shujaat Bukhari and his security personnel.

Over 75 government employees with terror links have been dismissed.

The administration has made police verification mandatory in government recruitment.

Chandigarh man held

Gagandeep Singh alias Gagan hailing from Gali Nazar Singh Wali in Punjab's Tarn Taran district was arrested for allegedly sharing with Pakistani intelligence operatives sensitive information about troop deployment and strategic locations during Operation Sindoor.

He was allegedly in contact with Pakistan-based pro-Khalistan leader Gopal Singh Chawla. The accused also received money for passing on sensitive information. A mobile phone containing information has been recovered. An FIR has been registered against him and investigation was underway. *—PTI*

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PHOTO: FREEPIK

India, Russia arms deal rubs US 'the wrong way'

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

India buying military gear from Russia and aligning with BRICS, which sought to reduce dollar dependence has "rubbed US the wrong way", US Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick said, stressing the two countries were going to have a "great relationship together."

"…….there were certain things that the Indian government did that generally rubbed the United States the wrong way," Lutnick said while addressing the US-India Strategic Partnership Forum (USISPF) Leadership Summit here on 2 June.

Lutnick also cited the example of India being a part of BRICS grouping (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), which does not support the dollar and dollar hegemony. Lutnick said one should expect a trade deal between India and the US in the "not too distant future". He further said that "earlier countries get a better deal. That's the way it is." Noting the high tariffs that India has, Lutnick said that President Trump is willing to call that out straight away. *—PTI*

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AMID COMMUNAL TENSIONS

36 under police lens in Dakshina Kannada

MANGALURU, 3 JUNE

The Dakshina Kannada district police, in coordination with the district administration, have identified 36 individuals for potential externment due to repeated involvement in communal offences and activities that threaten public peace.

The individuals, flagged by multiple police stations, are habitual offenders linked to incidents of commu-nal unrest. Recommendations for their externment have been submitted under provisions of the Karna-taka Police Act, which allows removal of individuals deemed a threat to law and order. Police stations in Bantwal Rural and Town, Vitla, Puttur Town and Rural, Uppinangady, Punjalkatte, Belthangady, Sullia, and Bellare have submitted proposals. The offenders, ranging from their early twen-ties to mid-fifties, have prior records involving communal violence, unlawful assembly, and breach of peace.

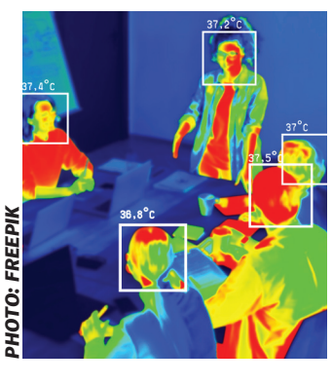


PHOTO: FREEPIK

One more arrested in Suhas Shetty murder case

The Mangaluru City Crime Branch arrested another person for allegedly conspiring and sheltering the prime accused in Hindu activist Suhas Shetty murder case. Shetty, also a known rowdy sheeter was killed by a group of assailants here last month. The arrested is Abdul Razak, 59, a resident of Mangaluru. With this, the total number of arrests made in this case stands at 16. *—PTI*

>>>More on Page 2

Amlan Aditya Biswas appointed as Spl IMA officer

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Amlan Aditya Biswas, an IAS officer from the 1997 batch, was appointed as Special Officer and Competent Authority, I Monetary Advisory (IMA) with immediate effect, according to a government notification. He also holds the post of Regional Commissioner, Revenue Department and Nodal Officer (Economic Offences), Bengaluru. Biswas has been put in concurrent charge of both the positions. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: PTI

Jarkiholi declines honorary doctorate

BELAGAVI, 3 JUNE

Karnataka's Public Works Minister, Satish Jarkiholi, has declined an honorary doctorate offered by Manasa Gangotri Open University, Mysuru. In a letter to the university's vice-chancellor, Jarkiholi explained that while he appreciates the honour, he cannot accept it due to his responsibilities as a public servant. Speaking to reporters, he said he preferred the university to recognise someone more deserving, as he needs to focus on completing official projects. The minister's decision is also influenced by a past controversy involving a fake doctorate awarded to one of his brothers by a North Indian university. Representing the Yamakanamaradi constituency, Jarkiholi also serves as the in-charge minister for Belagavi district. Known for his prudence, his rejection highlights his commitment to duty and integrity. *—Salar News*

3 Yadgir municipal officers held for illegal land grab

YADGIR, 3 JUNE

Three municipal staff members - two from Yadgir Municipality and one from Shahapur Municipality - have been arrested for creating fake documents to illegally transfer government property. The incident came to light on Monday, when the arrests were made and a case registered. According to the complaint filed by Municipal Commissioner Umesh Chavhan at the city police station, the three accused, Manappa Badiger, Mainoddin Mohammad Hazrat and Hanamantappa Ashanal had fraudulently registered a plot located near the Yadgir border under the name of a woman Mallamma Ramanna. The case involves the sale of residential plots under an Ashraya housing scheme, which comprises a total of 96 plots in the area. Some of the plots were officially approved and registered by the city Municipal Council, while others remain unregistered. Specifically, one was found to have been illegally registered in the name Ramanna's name. *—Salar News*

Apology won't make you small: Yediyurappa to Kamal

Haasan tells KFCC that he respects the love for Kannada

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Slamming actor Kamal Haasan for "speaking insensitively" about Kannada, veteran BJP leader BS Yediyurappa on Tuesday said, "apologising does not make anyone smaller, nor does arrogance make anyone greater".

Actor-politician Haasan's statement claiming that "Kannada was born out of Tamil" sparked widespread outrage among pro-Kannada groups and cultural organisations.

Taking to X, the former chief minister said, 'Kannada is truth, Kannada is eternal' is not just the rallying cry of Kannadigas, "but it is also the pledge of Kannadigas towards mother Bhuvaneshwari, the deity of Kannada".

"Many senior linguistic experts have demonstrated that Kannada did not originate from any specific language," he added. "(Hassan's) behaviour, which unnecessarily disrupts peace, harmony, and unity, is not right. He has hurt the sentiments of crores of Kannadigas, and he must respectfully apologise to Kannada and Kannadigas."

Haasan, meanwhile, writing to the KFCC, asserted that his love for Kannada was genuine and acknowledged the film body's concern.

He said he only intended to convey that "we are all one, and from the same (linguistic) family," and did not mean to diminish the Kannada language in any way.

The actor added that "like Tamil, Kannada has a proud literary and cultural tradition," which he has long admired.

He had great respect for the love that Kannadigas had for their mother tongue, he wrote.

"I have always stood for the equal dignity of all Indian languages and remain opposed to the dominance of any one language over another, as such imbalance undermines the linguistic fabric of India," he added.

The actor said cinema must remain a bridge between people and not a wall that divides them. "This was the intent of my statement and I never have been nor would ever want to give any room for public unrest and animosity," Haasan said.

Meanwhile, the KFCC, after an emergency executive committee meeting, reiterated that Haasan must withdraw his statement and apologise. *—PTI*

BS Yediyurappa, Kamal Haasan — PHOTO: PTI

MNM posts posters supporting Hassan

Chennai, 3 June

The Makkal Needhi Maiam party put up posters in Chennai supporting its leader Kamal Haasan and claimed "truth needed no apology". The posters were put up ahead of the Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce's meeting to discuss the release of the film. The image of the posters, shared by the MNM functionary, said the party firmly stood with its leader and emphasised that there was no need for an apology for speaking the truth. The South India Artistes' Association defended Hassan claiming he aimed to promote unity. *—PTI*

> **There is no dispute or debate on the rich legacy of Kannada language... Throughout my career, I have cherished the warmth and affection extended to me by the Kannada-speaking community**
>
> -Kamal Hassan, Actor

> **We can't set up a fight between two states. We need to be cognisant of the fact a large number of people travel to and from Tamil Nadu on a daily basis. I am confident that Kamal Hassan will respect the Court's decision. I appeal to Kannada organisations not to protest in front of the theatres creating law and order situation**
>
> -DK Shivakumar, Deputy Chief Minister

Dakshina Kannada bans 36 amid violence

MANGALURU, 3 JUNE

Dakshina Kannada police identified 36 repeated communal offenders for externment from Mangaluru district, acting under Section 55 of the Karnataka Police Act.

These individuals have been flagged for inciting communal violence, unlawful assemblies, and breach of peace.

HERE'S THE FULL LIST

Bantwal Town:
- Husainar, 46
- Mohammad Safaan, 26
- Raju alias Rajesh, 35
- Bhuvi alias Bhuvith Shetty, 35

Bantwal Rural:
- Pavan Kumar, 33
- Charan alias Charan Raj, 28
- Abdul Latheef, 40
- Mohammad Ashraf, 44
- Moydhin Afghan alias Addu, 24
- Bharat Raj B alias
- Bharat Kumelu, 38

Vittal Police Station:
- Ganesh alias Ganesh Poojary, 35
- Abdul Khader alias Saukath, 34
- Chandrhas, 23

Beltangady:
- Manoj Kumar, 37
- Mahesh Shetty Timarodi, 53

Puttur Town:
- Hakeem Koornadka alias Abdul Hakeem, 38
- Ajith Rai, 39
- Arun Kumar Puthila (54)
- Manish S, 34
- Abdul Rahiman, 38
- K Azeez, 48

Puttur Rural:
- Kishore, 34
- Rakesh K, 30
- Nishanth Kumar, 22

Kadaba:
- Mohammad Nawaz, 32

Uppinangady:
- Santosh Kumar Rai alias Santu Adekkal, 35
- Jayaram, 25
- Shamsuddin, 36
- Sandeep, 24
- Mohammad Shakir, 35
- Abdul Azeez alias Karaya Azeez, 36

Sullia:
- Lathesh Gundy, 32
- Manohar alias Manu, 40

Bellare
- Prasad, 35
- Shameer K, 38

> **The government is running the State like feudal lords. The Siddaramaiah-led government is running a Tughlaq-style administration that suppresses democracy.... It is also conspiring to insult Hindu activists**
>
> -BY Vijayendra, BJP State President

> **We are taking strict action to ensure peace in the region. Externment is a preventive measure aimed at breaking the nexus of habitual offenders who pose a recurring threat to society**
>
> -Arun K, Dakshina Kannada Superintendent of Police

JOIN HANDS FOR A GREENER FUTURE: GUV

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Governor Thawaar Chand Gehlot emphasised the need for a renewed consciousness of love and respect for nature at the Bengaluru Sustainability Conference on Tuesday. The conference, titled 'Advancing Sustainable Development Goals: Enhancing the Impact of Multi-Stakeholder Partner ships through Knowledge Sharing and Collaboration', was co-hosted by OP Jindal University and RV University.

Gehlot highlighted growing concerns over pollution and the critical importance of environmental protection. "Sustainable development has always been a core principle of India's philosophy and ideology," he stated. "In recent times, the increasing concern about pollution has made us think about environmental protection. Especially, the lack of oxygen has made everyone realise that environmental protection should be our top priority." *—PTI*

DKS seeks meeting with PM on Alamatti dam height increase

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Tuesday reiterated that he would seek time from the Prime Minister and Union Jal Shakthi Minister to discuss Alamtti dam height increase after Maharashtra raised objections to it.

"I will seek time from Prime Minister and the Jal Shakthi Minister once Chief Minister Siddaramaiah writes a reply to the objection raised by Maharashtra Chief Minister (Devendra Fadnavis)," he said speaking to reporters after inspecting the venue of Kempegowda Jayanthi in Sumanahalli, Magadi Road.

"Siddaramaiah will write a reply within two days. I have already shared my inputs with him. We will also share the letter with all the MPs so that they can take it up in the Parliament," he said. "Fadnavis is an intelligent person. He was in favour of the project in the past."

Asked about his visit to inspect the venue for Kempegowda Jayanthi, he said, "We have decided to celebrate this year's Kempegowda Jayanthi at this venue. The land allotted to Kempegowda Development Authority is nearby. We will lay the foundation stone for the Kempegowda Development Authority on 27 June and celebrate his Jayanthi. In the allotted land, a museum on Kempegowda will also come up... A railway line will also pass through this place and a station will be built here. It will be taken up in the Cabinet meeting."

Asked if it was too far from the City, he said, "Bengaluru has grown. Where else can we allot the land? No one is willing to part with Golf Course and Race Course." *—Salar*

Siddaramaiah will write a reply within two days. I have already shared my inputs with him. We will also share the letter with all the MPs so that they can take it up in the Parliament
-DK Shivakumar

Nadda urges focus on mental health, geriatrics

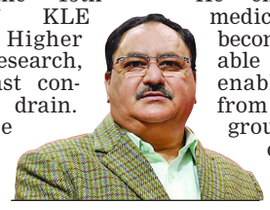
BELAGAVI, 3 JUNE

Union Health Minister JP Nadda encouraged students on Tuesday to pursue careers in mental health education and geriatrics, highlighting the importance of ongoing research to support those in need. He stressed that while ageing cannot be stopped, it can be delayed to improve quality of life, which requires continued scientific effort.

Speaking at the 15th Convocation of KLE Academy of Higher Education and Research, Nadda recalled past concerns about brain drain. Under Prime Minister Modi's leadership, medical education has expanded significantly, with undergraduate seats increasing from 45,000 to 118,000 and postgraduate seats from 37,000 to 54,000.

"We are going to have 75,000 extra seats in medical education. And It's not only increasing the seats, we are also trying to see that the medical education is affordable, accessible, medical education is for the all sections of the society," he said.

He emphasised that medical education is becoming more affordable and accessible, enabling students from modest backgrounds to pursue careers in medicine. *—PTI*



Elderly woman raped, killed in Kolar

SRINIVASAPUR, 3 JUNE

An eighty-year-old woman, was reportedly raped and murdered in Srinivasapur, Kolar on Monday morning, leading to the arrest of a suspect named Babu, a mason residing in Gafar Khan Mohalla. The victim has been identifiedasLakhmidevamma, from HG Hosur in Srinivasapur taluk.

Lakhmidevamma was reported missing from her home two days prior to the incident, prompting her relatives to search for her in vain.

Meanwhile, Babu allegedly encountered her lying by the roadside near a sandy maidan. Police reports suggest that he offered assistance to the frail woman before taking her to a secluded area where he assaulted and killed her.

After the heinous act, Babu reportedly returned to the original spot, where he stole cash from her bag before fleeing the scene. The entire incident was captured on nearby CCTV, with footage showing Babu conversing with Lakhmidevamma and carrying her to the secluded location. Police were able to apprehend the suspect following after reviewing surveillance footage, Circle Inspector Mohammed Goravanakolla said. *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

Students from various schools take part in a painting competition held to mark World Environment Day, organised by the Pollution Control Board at Cubbon Park in Bengaluru on Tuesday — PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD

GREEN INITIATIVES

City gets nation's first solar EV charging station

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

The country's first solar-powered electric vehicle (EV) charging station integrated with second-life battery storage was launched at the BESCOM EV Hub Charging Station in the City on Tuesday.

Renewable Energy to Electric Vehicle (RE2EV) Is a pilot project, which marks a major milestone in clean energy and green transport infrastructure. It was inaugurated by Energy Minister KJ George.

George noted that the integration of solar energy with second-life batteries ensures sustainable, grid-independent operation and improved charging access in a high-demand transit zone.

Supplier of the nine DC fast chargers for RE2EV, a 45 kWp rooftop solar photovoltaic (PV) system, feeds into a 100 kWh Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) made of repurposed batteries, according to a press release issued by Delta Electronics India.

These batteries although can no longer be used in vehicles, retain enough capacity to store and discharge energy efficiently. The hub, situated near the airport, is capable of charging up to 23 vehicles simultaneously.

The project has been developed under the Green Urban Mobility Innovation Living Lab and supported by GIZ India, BESCOM, and DULT, as part of the SUM-ACA (Sustainable Urban Mobility – Air Quality, Climate Action, Accessibility) initiative, stated the press release.

Karnataka has over 5,880 EV charging stations -- 4,462 of which are in Bengaluru Urban district – of which 140 new chargers were added this year alone, the release said.

Information on the RE2EV hub, like location, availability, and rates, can be accessed via BESCOM's "EV Mitra" app. *—PTI*

The project was developed under the Green Urban Mobility Innovation Living Lab and supported by GIZ India, BESCOM, and DULT — PHOTO: X

KIA PARTNERS WITH MAP FOR ART MUSEUMS AT TERMINAL 2

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

Kempegowda International Airport, in partnership with Bengaluru's Museum of Art & Photography (MAP), has launched art museums in the domestic and international terminals of Terminal 2. The initiative offers travellers a chance to experience art through innovative digital installations.

The museums feature digital exhibitions showcasing works by renowned artists such as Jamini Roy, Jangarh Singh Shyam, Jyoti Bhatt, Suresh Punjabi and LN Tallur. Additionally, there are curated displays from MAP's extensive film collection, including posters and stills from Bollywood cinema.

Interactive puzzles inspired by artworks like SH Raza's 'Universe', Jamini Roy's 'Last Supper' and NS Bendre's 'The Lotus Sellers' offer engaging experiences for passengers. A selection of unique home and lifestyle products based on the museum's collection is also available for purchase.

At the terminal, the exhibition 'Bhuri Bai: My Life as an Artist' features original works by the Padma Shri-awarded painter. Abhishek Poddar, MAP's founder, said this partnership will broaden appreciation of South Asian art. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Gaurav Gogoi begins tenure as Assam Cong Chief

GUWAHATI, 3 JUNE

Lok Sabha MP Gaurav Gogoi began his tenure as Assam Congress president with the rallying cry "Juz Hobo" (There will be battle), urging party workers to prepare for next year's assembly elections. Taking charge from Bhupen Kumar Borah at state Congress headquarters, Gogoi appealed for support from all sections of society to replace the current BJP government with one focused on harmony and inclusive development. Inspired by leaders like Mahatma Gandhi and his late father Tarun Gogoi, he promised to lead the party with a commitment to equality. Gogoi, unfazed by BJP attacks on his family, undertook a three-day procession across Assam, visiting key towns to connect with supporters. *—PTI*

CPI(M) questions BJP, Cong's silence over bank scam

PORT BLAIR, 3 JUNE

CPI (M) Andaman and Nicobar Islands unit secretary, D Ayyappan, has criticised both BJP and Congress for their silence over alleged irregularities in loans sanctioned by the Andaman and Nicobar State Cooperative Bank Ltd. He noted that while both parties previously raised the issue as a political stunt, they have remained quiet since an FIR was filed against the bank's management, including former Congress MP Kuldeep Rai Sharma. Allegations suggest loans were granted to fictitious firms before 2024 Lok Sabha elections, ignoring proper procedures like the loan screening committee's recommendations and CIBIL reports. Ayyappan demanded investigations by CBI, ED, and Income Tax Department. Both have yet to comment. *—PTI*

Bihar MP calls for Tej Pratap's reinstatement

PATNA, 3 JUNE

RJD leader and Buxar MP Sudhakar Singh has urged party chief Lalu Prasad to reconsider expelling Tej Pratap Yadav over his alleged relationship with another woman. Tej Pratap, Lalu's elder son, revealed on social media on 24 May, that he had been in a 12-year relationship despite being married, later claiming his account was hacked. Lalu expelled him the next day, calling his behaviour "irresponsible" and damaging to their cause. Singh defended Tej Pratap, citing Hindu customs and socialist Ram Manohar Lohia's views on relationships, urging tolerance. Meanwhile, Tej Pratap accused a conspiracy aimed at dividing him and his younger brother Tejashwi Yadav. *—PTI*

ACB calls Damania in Munde corruption probe

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Maharashtra Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) has summoned social activist Anjali Damania for questioning over her corruption allegations against NCP leader and former minister Dhananjay Munde. Damania received a letter on Monday instructing her to appear within two days with relevant documents. She plans to attend ACB office on Wednesday. Damania accused Munde of an Rs 88 crore scam in the agriculture department during his tenure in the previous Mahayuti coalition government. She claimed the department purchased equipment and fertilisers at inflated rates, bypassing the Union government's 2016 directive to transfer funds directly to farmers via Direct Benefit Transfer. Munde dismissed the allegations as baseless and challenged her to produce proof in court. *—PTI*

'Pak ended 48-hr strike plan in just 8'

CDS says Pak had launched multiple coordinated attacks with the intent of bringing India to its knees

NEW DELHI/PUNE, 3 JUNE

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Tuesday detailed the events that occurred on 10 May.

Chauhan said that Pakistan had launched multiple attacks with the motive of "bringing India to its knees" within 48 hours.

The Gen said that the 48-hour plan to defeat India failed as it had to be stopped in just 8 hours. This led Islamabad to ask for a ceasefire.

Speaking at Pune University, Chauhan said, "On 10 May at 1am, their aim was to get India to its knees in 48 hours. Multiple attacks were launched. They have escalated this conflict, which we had actually hit only terror targets."

He added that, "Operations which they thought would continue for 48 hours, folded up in about 8 hours, and then they picked up the telephone and said they wanted to talk."

Additionally, Anil Chauhan commented on India's military resilience in the face of losses, during a speech at Savitribai Phule Pune University. He described Pakistan's strategy of "bleeding India by a thousand cuts" while asserting that India has established new boundaries against cross-border terrorism, particularly referencing Op Sindoor.

Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan PHOTO: ANI

Despite criticism regarding acknowledged losses of combat jets during the operation, Gen Chauhan emphasised that outcomes are paramount and should take precedence over setbacks. He reiterated that maintaining morale is crucial during wartime and stated that state-sponsored terrorism from Pakistan must cease.

Highlighting the effectiveness of Indian military operations, he noted precision strikes on Pakistani targets, sometimes as narrow as two metres. He explained that Pakistan's attempted counter-operation, initially intended to last 48 hours, collapsed in approximately eight hours, prompting Islamabad to seek negotiations on 10 May. "We accepted their request for talks," Gen Chauhan concluded, underscoring India's commitment to confronting terrorism while affirming that the nation will not succumb to threats of violence or nuclear coercion. *– PTI*

- He described Pakistan's strategy of "bleeding India by a thousand cuts" while asserting that India has established new boundaries against cross-border terrorism, particularly referencing Op Sindoor.

Opposition parties call for special parliamentary session

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Leaders from 16 parties within the INDIA bloc have united in calling for a Special Session of Parliament following recent developments, particularly in light of Operation Sindoor. Senior opposition figures submitted a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing various pressing issues, including the recent Pahalgam attack, claims by US President Donald Trump regarding a ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and the tragic civilian casualties due to cross-border shelling.

Key opposition leaders, including Congress's Jairam Ramesh, Rahul Gandhi, and Trinamool Congress's Derek O'Brien, convened to discuss the importance of the session. They underscored the necessity for a parliamentary debate to reconvene support for the armed forces and address governmental measures against terrorism.

Congress leader Deepender Hooda emphasised, "It is important to call a session... All parties will be able to thank the armed forces." Additionally, Trinamool Congress proposed that the session be scheduled for June, post the return of multi-party delegations from abroad. The demand for a special session has been articulated since the Pahalgam attack. *– PTI*

One more arrested in Assam for 'sympathising' with Pakistan

GUWAHATI, 3 JUNE

Authorities have apprehended another individual for allegedly expressing pro-Pakistan sentiments on social media, bringing the total number of arrests to 82 following the recent Pahalgam terror attack.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma announced the arrest of Ajibul Islam from Lakhimpur, stating that the crackdown on individuals sympathising with Pakistan will persist. Sarma emphasised, "Statewide action against traitors will continue, and no one will be spared."

Certain arrested individuals may face charges under the National Security Act (NSA).

Additionally, opposition AIUDF MLA Aminul Islam was arrested on sedition charges linked to the attack but has since been. *– PTI*

Indian delegation advocates for anti-terrorism abroad

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

A multi-party Indian parliamentary delegation led by Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, the delegation engaged with various leaders in Brazil, where Tharoor emphasised that India could engage in dialogue with Pakistan if substantial measures are taken against terrorism infrastructure in the country.

In Malaysia, another delegation, led by JD(U) MP Sanjay Kumar Jha, was thanked for outlining India's approach to combating terrorism and reaffirming Malaysia's commitment to peace.

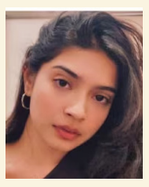
Meanwhile, a third team, headed by BJP MP Baijayant Panda, returned from visits to Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Algeria, reporting a positive reception of India's counter-terrorism message.

Additionally, the delegation met with Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit in Egypt, focusing on a unified effort against terrorism. *– PTI*

Calcutta HC denies bail to law student over offensive video

KOLKATA, 3 JUNE

The Calcutta High Court, presided over by Justice Parth Sarathi Chatterjee, refused to grant interim bail to 22-year-old law student **Sharmistha Panoli** on Tuesday.



Panoli was arrested in Gurugram on 30 May following dissemination of an offensive video targeting individuals based on their identity, subsequent to Operation Sindoor. After facing public backlash, she deleted the video and issued an apology. Currently a student at Symbiosis Law School in Pune and boasting nearly 2,00,000 followers on social media, Panoli was remanded to 14 days of judicial custody by a Kolkata court.

During hearing, Justice Chatterjee ordered that a complaint filed on 15 May at Garden Reach police station be treated as principal case, while staying all other FIRs conveying similar allegations. *– Agencies*

EC to launch system providing timely voter data updates

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Election Commission on Tuesday said it is introducing a streamlined, technology-driven system to provide timely updates on approximate voter turnout percentage data which "significantly" reduces the time lag associated with the earlier manual reporting methods.

Under the initiative, the presiding officer (PRO) of each polling station will now be directly entering voter turnout on the new ECINET application every two hours on polling day to reduce the time lag in the updation of the approximate polling trends.

This will be automatically aggregated at the constituency level. The approximate voting percentage data will continue to be published every two hours as before, the poll authority said.

"Notably, voter turnout data will now be entered into ECINET by PROs immediately after the close of poll, before they leave the polling station. It will reduce the delays and ensure that the approximate percentage of votes polled be available on the updated voter turnout app constituency-wise after the end of polls subject to network connectivity," it said. *– PTI*

- The approximate voting percentage data will continue to be published every two hours as before, the poll authority said.

TRIBUTES TO KARUNANIDHI

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and DMK President MK Stalin paid rich tributes to his father and former chief minister M Karunanidhi on his 101 birth anniversary on Tuesday, hailing him as a towering Tamil personality who elevated Tamil Nadu PHOTO: PTI

PV ANVAR FILES NOMINATION

Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader PV Anvar, who is contesting in Nilambur Assembly bypoll independently, has declared his assets while filing nomination on Tuesday

Here are the details

- Movable assets : **Rs 18 cr**
- Immovable assets: **Rs 17 cr**
- 2 wives' assets : **Rs 8 cr & Rs 3 cr**
- Criminal cases : **10**
- Liabilities : **Rs 20 cr**

'India not invited at G7 meet is another diplomatic bungle'

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Congress on Tuesday said India not being invited at the G7 meeting in Canada is "yet another big diplomatic bungle" after the "blunder" of allowing the US to "mediate" between India and Pakistan.

Canada is hosting the summit from 15 to 17 June that is expected to deliberate on pressing challenges facing the globe including the Russia-Ukraine conflict and the situation in West Asia.

For the first time in six years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is unlikely to attend the upcoming G7 summit to be held in Canada's Alberta province, people familiar with the matter have said.

It is learnt that Ottawa is yet to send an invitation to the Indian PM for the summit but Modi, in any way, would have skipped it as such a visit would have required a lot of groundwork considering the current state of ties between the two sides, said the people cited above. *– PTI*

USHA VANCE SPEAKS

'Kids put Modi in grandfather category'

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

Second Lady of US Usha Vance described her visit to India in April "as the trip of a lifetime" for the family and said her three young children have put Prime Minister Narendra Modi in "grandfather category".

Vice President JD Vance undertook his first official visit to India in April and was accompanied by Usha Vance and their three young children Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel.

The Vances were in India from 21-24 April and met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Delhi before travelling to Jaipur and Agra.

Usha Vance emphasised that meeting the PM Modi "was really very special."

"We'd actually had a chance to meet him before," she said adding that when her kids, who were sleep-deprived when travelling in Paris, saw the Prime Minister, they "saw an Indian man with a white beard and white hair, and they just put him in the grandfather category immediately. So they are very into him.

"They just love him. And he really cemented his status by giving our five-year-old a birthday present that day," she said.

The Vances and PM Modi had met in France in February during the AI Action Summit.

She recalled that when the Vance family visited PM Modi's residence in Delhi, her kids ran up to him and were hugging him.

She noted that the conversation between her husband and the PM was "very productive" and "it was a real opportunity for us to kind of cement that personal relationship that they have, which I think is only to the good." *—PTI*

Second Lady of US Usha Vance, Vice President JD Vance and children Ewan, Vivek and Mirabel with Prime Minister Narendra Modi PHOTO: PTI

Posters targeting Israeli PM found in New Delhi

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

The Delhi Police reported to the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) regarding "wanted" posters depicting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, which were allegedly placed by an embassy staff member in Chanakyapuri. The incident was identified on 29 May at approximately 7.30am, when police observed the posters affixed to electricity poles near prominent schools, including Carmel Convent School and the American Embassy School.

Chanakyapuri, home to numerous foreign embassies, is under close surveillance. Upon notification, police teams promptly initiated an investigation, reviewing CCTV footage which revealed a man in a blue shirt and black trousers arriving on a bicycle around 5.30 am to put up the posters. Investigators traced his whereabouts to a residential flat on Sardar Patel Marg, discovering the occupant was an employee of a Western European embassy.

Due to diplomatic immunity, no action was taken against the individual. However, given the sensitive nature of the incident, a report was escalated to the MHA for further coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs. Police affirmed their commitment to maintaining surveillance in the area to avert any potential disturbances. *– PTI*

PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA

20% reservation for Agniveers in UP police recruitment

LUCKNOW, 3 JUNE

The Uttar Pradesh government announced a plan to allocate 20 per cent reservation for Agniveers during direct recruitment to various positions in the state's police force. This decision was made during a cabinet meeting led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.

Finance Minister Suresh Kumar Khanna highlighted that the initiative aimed to provide significant post-service employment opportunities for Agniveer completing their four-year tenure under the Agnipath scheme.

This reservation would apply across all categories with age relaxation of up to three years. The recruitment will include roles such as constables and firemen, with the first batch expected to begin in 2026. Other states and central forces have initiated similar schemes. *—PTI*

Row erupts after POCSO accused attends Kerala event

T'PURAM, 3 JUNE

In Kerala, the state's General Education Department has initiated an investigation following the participation of a POCSO case accused in a school reopening ceremony. The individual, a popular vlogger, attended the "praveshanotsavam" event as a celebrity guest at a state-run school in Thiruvananthapuram.

Education Minister V Sivankutty sought an explanation from school officials regarding this incident. The deputy director of education will conduct an immediate inquiry and submit a report. The reopening ceremony welcomed students back to school following the summer vacation, with Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan inaugurating the state-level ceremony at a school in Alappuzha. Concerns were raised regarding the accused's presence in a school, prompting the investigation. *—PTI*

U'khand students to get free medical, engg coaching

DEHRADUN, 3 JUNE

The Uttarakhand government has launched the 'Super 100' programme, offering free coaching to 100 talented students preparing for medical and engineering entrance examinations. Initiated by School Education Dhan Singh Rawat, the programme is designed for Class 12 science students from government schools and operates under the 'Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan'. Students were selected based on an entrance exam, and the programme is underway in Dehradun from 1 June to 15 July. Participants will receive free food, accommodation, study materials, and expert coaching. After completion of the offline session, students will avail online coaching throughout the year, with ongoing evaluations to better prepare them for increasing their chance of success in competitive exams. *—PTI*

Lord Buddha's relics return to India from Vietnam

Lord Buddha's holy relics returned to India aboard an IAF aircraft after a month-long exposition in Vietnam that drew over 17 million devotees
PHOTO: PTI

5.5L hit in Assam floods; roads & rail affected in NE

Death toll rises to 36; 12,610 hectares of crops inundated

GUWAHATI/ITANAGAR/ AIZAWL/IMPHAL/ GANGTOK, 3 JUNE

ITBP personnel trek through tough terrain to deliver food supplies to stranded civilians at Tachor Potu, NH-13, Arunachal Pradesh, following heavy rains triggered landslides in the state **PHOTO: PTI**

The flood situation in the Northeast remained critical on Tuesday as the toll due to deluge and landslides triggered by heavy rain over the past few days rose to 36, while over 5.5 lakh remained affected across several states in the region.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi assured Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, of the Centre's full support.

Assam Chief Minister Himanta Sarma visited Cachar district on Tuesday

An 'orange alert' was issued for Dhubri, South Salmara Mankachar, Goalpara and Kokrajhar.

The death toll remained at 11, while two others remained missing.

Road, rail and ferry services were affected in several areas.

A crop area of 12,610 hectares has been inundated.

Brahmaputra, Barak and Kopili rivers were flowing above the danger level at multiple places, while Subansiri, Burhidihing, Dhansiri, Rukni, Dhaleswari, Katakhal and Kushiyara were also above the red mark.

The chief minister briefed Modi on how continuous rainfall in Assam and adjoining states has led to flooding.

Arunachal Pradesh

The death toll in floods and landslides triggered by relentless rain in Arunachal Pradesh has increased to 11 as a labourer died in a wall collapse incident in Anjaw district. Three other workers were also injured.

Floods have affected 938 people in 23 districts. Widespread destruction occurred in Lower Subansiri, the Itanagar Capital and Pakke Kessang, where key infrastructure was severely affected.

Mizoram

Mizoram has reported five deaths in the calamities triggered by heavy rains in the last 10 days.Over hundred trucks carrying essential commodities to the southern districts were stranded in Serchhip. All schools in 10 districts of Mizoram remained closed for the fourth day on Tuesday.

Manipur

Over 56,000 people have been affected by flash floods triggered by overflowing rivers and embankment breaches in Manipur. One person was swept away by a river in Imphal East district.

Gangtok

34 people were evacuated from landslide hit Chhaten in North Sikkim on Tuesday.

The eight tourists who went missing after their car plunged into the Teesta river in Sikkim are yet to be found. *– PTI*

NEW DOMICILE RULES

Govt announces 15-year residency rule for Ladakh

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

- These changes come after extensive consultations led by a high-level committee chaired by Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, constituted in January 2023 to address the concerns of Ladakh's residents.

The Centre on Tuesday introduced new domicile and reservation rules for the Union Territory of Ladakh, aimed at addressing long-standing local concerns.

Under the new regulations, individuals who have resided in Ladakh for at least 15 years, or have studied there for seven years and appeared in Class 10 or 12 examinations from an educational institution within the UT, will be considered domiciles for the purpose of employment under the UT administration or local bodies, excluding cantonment boards.

Children of Central government officials, All India Services officers, employees of PSUs, statutory bodies, autonomous bodies, public sector banks, central universities and recognised research institutes — who have served in Ladakh for a cumulative period of 10 years — will also qualify as domiciles.

The 10 per cent reservation for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) remains unchanged.

In a separate notification, the government amended the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils Act, 1997, mandating that not less than one-third of seats in the Councils be reserved for women. These reserved seats will rotate among constituencies based on serial numbers notified in the official gazette.

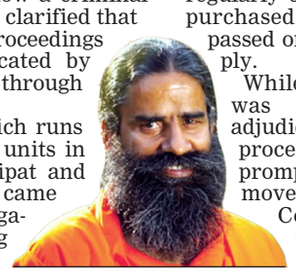
These changes come after extensive consultations led by a high-level committee chaired by Minister of State for Home, Nityanand Rai, constituted in January 2023 to address the concerns of Ladakh's residents. The committee held several rounds of talks with local representatives in pursuit of a fair and amicable resolution. *– PTI*

HC bins Patanjali's plea against Rs 273 cr notice

PRAYAGRAJ, 3 JUNE

The Allahabad High Court has dismissed Patanjali Ayurved Ltd's petition challenging a Rs 273.5 crore penalty under the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Act, ruling that such penalties are civil in nature and do not require criminal proceedings.

A division bench rejected Patanjali's argument that the penalty imposed under Section 122 of the CGST Act constitutes criminal liability and should follow a criminal trial. The court clarified that GST penalty proceedings can be adjudicated by proper officers through civil processes.



Patanjali, which runs manufacturing units in Haridwar, Sonipat and Ahmednagar, came under investigation following reports of suspicious transactions involving firms with high input tax credit (ITC) utilisation but lacking income tax credentials. The Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI), Ghaziabad, issued a show cause notice in 2024, proposing the penalty under clauses (ii) and (vii) of Section 122(1).

Authorities alleged Patanjali engaged in circular trading—issuing tax invoices without actual movement of goods. They found quantities sold regularly exceeded quantities purchased, and ITC was passed on without real supply.

While the tax demand was dropped through adjudication, the penalty proceedings continued, prompting Patanjali to move court. The High Court, however, upheld the penalty proceedings. *–PTI*

Sambhal bans animal slaughter in public places during Bakra Eid

SAMBHAL, 3 JUNE

Religious leaders have been advised to complete the sacrificial rituals by 3pm between 7 and 9 June **PHOTO: ANI**

Sambhal district magistrate Rajender Pensiya on Tuesday announced that sacrificial slaughter in public places would not be permitted in the district in Uttar Pradesh during Bakrid and assured strict action against anyone attempting to disturb public order.

A peace committee meeting, which included representatives from areas where Eid prayers will be conducted, was held to discuss the arrangements. "All stakeholders were consulted. Sacrifices will be allowed only at 19 pre-identified sites. No public or open space will be used for animal sacrifice," Pensiya said addressing the media.

He further stated that the slaughter of prohibited animals has been banned for years, with no such incidents having occurred in the district in the past five years.

"Eid prayers are expected to be held peacefully. The administration will ensure proper arrangements for water, electricity and sanitation for all devotees," the district magistrate said. Religious leaders have been advised to complete the sacrificial rituals by 3pm between 7 and 9 June. As an additional precaution, Pensiya noted that preventive measures were in place against approximately 900 to 950 individuals. *—PTI*

Cop removed for asking Bhopal gym to bar Muslims

BHOPAL, 3 JUNE

A police sub-inspector, Dinesh Sharma, has been removed from field duty after allegedly asking a gym owner in Bhopal's Ayodhya Nagar to restrict Muslim trainers' entry. The incident came to light after a video of Sharma making the communal remark went viral.

Sharma has since been attached to the Police Lines, and an investigation is underway. Police officials have stated firmly that no act disrupting communal harmony will be tolerated.

The controversy began after members of the Bajrang Dal raised objections to the presence of Muslim trainers at the gym. Following the incident, Bhopal BJP MP Alok Sharma added fuel to the row, stating that a list of such gyms was being prepared. *—PTI*

Andhra, ISRO sign 5-yr space tech deal

AMARAVATI, 3 JUNE

Andhra CM N Chandrababu Naidu during signing of an MoU between SHAR (ISRO) and RTGS **PHOTO: PTI**

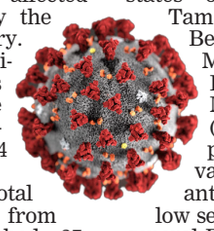
Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu announced a significant partnership with the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) aimed at enhancing citizen-centric governance through advanced space technology. The state's Real Time Governance System (RTGS) has formalized a five-year memorandum of nderstanding with the Sathish Dhawan Space Centre (SHAR) to augment its AWARE platform with satellite imagery and scientific data.

Naidu described the agreement as a "landmark step" towards improving governance, stating, "In a groundbreaking initiative, a five-year MoU was signed between SHAR (ISRO) and RTGS today, in the presence of SHAR director Rajarajan." This collaboration will see the integration of satellite imagery and scientific inputs across 42 applications, including agriculture, weather forecasting, disaster management, and urban planning. Naidu said that the AWARE platform was designed to harness data from various sources, including satellites, drones, the internet of things, sensors, mobile feeds, and surveillance cameras. By providing real-time alerts and advisories to citizens and government authorities via SMS, WhatsApp, and social media, it facilitated timely and informed decision-making for all stakeholders involved. *—PTI*

- Naidu said that the AWARE platform was designed to harness data from various sources, including satellites, drones, the internet of things, sensors, mobile feeds, and surveillance cameras.

Active Covid-19 cases over 4,000 in India

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE



India has witnessed a rise in active COVID-19 cases, surpassing the 4,000 mark, with Kerala remaining the most affected state, as reported by the Union Health Ministry. Current figures indicate 4,026 active cases nationwide, with five new fatalities recorded within the last 24 hours.

Since January, the total number of deaths from COVID-19 has reached 37. Following a steady increase, active cases rose from just 257 on 22 May to 3,395 by 31 May, and further to 4,026 recently. Kerala leads with 1,446 active cases, followed by Maharashtra (494), Gujarat (397), and Delhi (393).

In the latest update, five deaths occurred across four states- one each in Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal and two in Maharashtra. The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) reassured the public that the current variants are sub-variants of Omicron, with low severity levels. Director general Rajiv Behl noted ongoing monitoring, advising vigilance, but stated that there was no cause for alarm as the majority of cases were being managed under home care. *—PTI*

NO GOVT DECISION YET

Farmers to offer 36,000 acres under land pooling for Amaravati

AMARAVATI, 3 JUNE

Andhra Pradesh Municipal Minister P Narayana has said here that farmers have come forward to offer 36,000 acres of land for the second phase of land pooling for the greenfield capital city of Amaravati to accommodate an international airport, smart industries and a sports city.

Addressing a press conference at the secretariat on Monday, the minister noted that the TDP-led NDA government required 5,000 acres of land to build an airport similar to Shamshabad Airport in Hyderabad and another 2,500 acres each to accommodate smart industries and an international sports city respectively.

However, he observed that no decision has been taken yet whether the government should go for land acquisition or land pooling options, adding that village meetings are being held to elicit farmers' opinion.

According to Narayana, farmers are gravitating towards land pooling option.

The state government already has a land bank of 54,000 acres for the greenfield capital city, which is yet to be fully utilized by bringing in infrastructure and constructions and is going for an additional 40,000 acres of land under a second phase.

On April 15, Narayana had announced that Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu was keen on creating a 'mega city' combining adjacent Mangalagiri, Tadepalli, Guntur and Vijayawada with Amaravati. He also said that the 48th Capital Region Development Authority (CRDA) meeting chaired by the CM on 1 June took a decision to confirm the least cost bidders to construct five administrative towers in the core capital area of the greenfield capital city at an estimated cost of Rs 3,673 crore. Work on these towers would commence soon. *—PTI*

Punjab govt approves loan waiver for Dalit families

CHANDIGARH, 3 JUNE

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann chairs a Cabinet meeting in Chandigarh on Tuesday **PHOTO:X/ Bhagwant Mann**

The Punjab Cabinet has approved a loan waiver amounting to Rs 68 crore for over 4,000 Dalit families, as announced by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann following a cabinet meeting in Chandigarh.

This decision pertained to debts incurred from the Punjab Scheduled Castes Land Development and Finance Corporation, with the waiver covering loans taken before 31 March, 2020.

This initiative will benefit 4,727 families who took loans for various purposes, including establishing businesses and dairy farming.

"We are fulfilling the promise made by Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema in his recent budget speech to waive these debts," Mann said.

Cheema emphasized that the waiver encompasses both the principal amount and any accrued interest, including penal charges, providing significant relief to the Scheduled Caste community.

He noted that the debts had been pending for two decades, indicating that previous governments—both Congress and the Akali Dal-BJP—failed to address the issues faced by SC families during their tenure. This latest move is seen as a crucial step toward supporting disadvantaged communities in the state. *–PTI*

MOUNT ETNA ERUPTS

Sicily's Mount Etna put on a fiery show on Monday, sending a cloud of smoke and ash several kilometres into the air. According to Italy's INGV National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology the spectacle on Europe's most active volcano was caused when part of the southeast crater collapsed, resulting in hot lava flows. It was the 14th eruptive phase in recent months. The ash cloud emission had ended by the afternoon

PHOTO: PTI

India-Pak crisis intensifies as Track II diplomacy fades

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistan counterpart Shehbaz Sharif

PHOTO: X SPUTNIK

Without civil society actors working behind the scenes, India and Pakistan are left with a vacuum when trying to smooth out thorny issues like Kashmir.

For years, informal dialogue sponsored by NGOs and civil society groups was critical to building bridges between India and Pakistan.

The process is known as "track II diplomacy" and involves networks of non-state actors like NGOs, civil society members and peace activists. They all work towards finding prospective solutions to crises through dialogues with stakeholders. Governments often use feedback from Track II entities to help with policy-making.

Funding from Western donors would regularly sponsor informal interactions in neutral environments across the world. In this way, even the most hardline voices from both India and Pakistan could meet eye-to-eye and exchange viewpoints.

However, these networks between India and Pakistan have now been rendered less effective. This is partly due to funding problems, but also because the two governments are less inclined towards dialogue.

After India and Pakistan approached the brink of war in April, a group of track II actors from both countries issued a statement to deescalate tensions.

"We are of the considered view that fanning war hysteria and perpetuating ongoing tension into any kind of military conflict would be extremely destructive for our countries and peace-loving people," the statement said.

The statement was issued a week after the attack and a week before India launched cross-border strikes on "terror infrastructure" in Pakistan. The clashes eventually ended with a ceasefire.

Sushobha Barve is a founding member and executive secretary of the Centre for Dialogue and Reconciliation (CDU), a New Delhi-based think tank devoted to conflict resolution. She told DW that track II diplomacy had taken a hit.

"When governments aren't engaged in any formal dialogue, track II loses its relevance — and with that, its funding," Barve said.

Pakistani journalist Imtiaz Alam was a founding member of the NGO South Asia Free Media Association (SAFMA), alongside his Indian counterpart Vinod Sharma.

He told DW that track II diplomacy had enabled dialogue outside of formal channels like high commissions and intelligence agencies.

In addition to SAFMA, other prominent groups played influential roles in fostering dialogue between officials.

These included the South Asia Media Association, the Pakistan-India People's Forum for Peace and Democracy, the Pakistan-India Parliamentary Forum, the Chaophraya Dialogue, the Neemrana Dialogue, Women's Peace Initiatives, and the Southasia Peace and Action Network.

Over the years, their efforts helped build consensus on long-standing disputes between India and Pakistan, especially involving Kashmir. Both countries claim Kashmir in full but rule it in part, creating a decades-long flashpoint between the nuclear-armed neighbors.

Between 2005 and 2015, the CDU led a series of civil society dialogues on Kashmir , which enabled contact between the populations and cross-border trade.

Former Prime Ministers Manmohan Singh and Pervez Musharraf even agreed to set up "softer borders."

Barve from the CDU, who has worked on dialogue and reconciliation for nearly 40 years in violence-affected areas of India and South Asia, said that these meetings with stakeholders drew attention from the highest levels of government.

Conciliation Resources, another track II NGO, had been involved in India-Pakistan dialogues that successfully opened up more secure trade routes between India and Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

However, track II endeavors between India and Pakistan received their first major blow after the 2008 Mumbai terror attack by Pakistan-based Islamists.

Another big setback to diplomatic dialogue was New Delhi revoking Jammu and Kashmir's semi-independent status in 2019, which angered the local population.

In 2015, Germany-based pro-democratic Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) focused on "enhancing regional cooperation and peace in the South Asian region," and had organized trust-building dialogues with Indian and Pakistani interlocutors.

However, the focus of FES in South Asia has now changed.

FES India Director Christoph Mohr told DW that in 2025 FES India is "not working on India's neighborhood, Pakistan in particular, nor are we working on any regional peace mechanism."

"FES India focuses in its foreign policy work on the bilateral relationship with Germany and the EU, trade, and India's position in the world," Mohr wrote in an email.

—DW News

SALAR ساہر

K'taka among highest in female sex worker count

Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi and Telangana have the highest concentration of Female Sex Workers (FSW) in the country, according to a study.

Karnataka is at the top of the list with 15.4 per cent, followed by Andhra Pradesh with 12.0 per cent, Maharashtra with 9.6 per cent, Delhi with 8.9 per cent and Telangana with 7.6 per cent, the programmatic mapping and population size estimation (PMPSE) said.

The five "were states with highest size of FSW contributing around 53.0 per cent of total FSW key population size in country," it said.

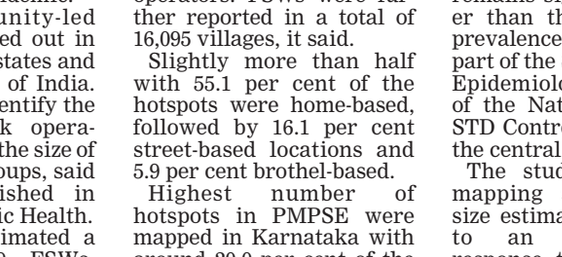
The number of FSW per 1000 adult women was highest in Arunachal Pradesh with 17.24 per cent, followed by Delhi with 15.46 per cent, Goa with 11.67 per cent, Chandigarh with 10.10 per cent and Karnataka with 8.34 per cent.

Observing that India has the world's second-largest HIV burden, the study said key populations of female sex workers (FSW), men who have sex with men (MSM), hijra/transgender (H/TG) people, and people who inject drugs (PWID), are disproportionately affected by HIV epidemic.

The community-led PMPSE was carried out in 651 districts of 32 states and Union Territories of India. The goal was to identify the hotspots, network operators, and estimate the size of key population groups, said the study, published in PLOS Global Public Health.

The PMPSE estimated a total of 9,95,499 FSWs, 3,51,020 MSM, 2,88,717 PWIDs, and 96,193 H/TG individuals.

- The five "were states with highest size of FSW contributing around 53.0 per cent of total FSW key population size in country," it said.



PMPSE for FSWs identified 43,579 hotspots and 10,718 network operators. FSWs were further reported in a total of 16,095 villages, it said.

Slightly more than half with 55.1 per cent of the hotspots were home-based, followed by 16.1 per cent street-based locations and 5.9 per cent brothel-based.

Highest number of hotspots in PMPSE were mapped in Karnataka with around 20.0 per cent of the total hotspots, followed by Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra with around 8.0 per cent each, Madhya Pradesh with around 7.0 per cent and Tamil Nadu with around 6.0 per cent.

In Telangana, there were around 38 FSWs per hotspot, highest in the country followed by 29 FSWs per hotspot in Andhra Pradesh and 26 FSWs per hotspot in Delhi, Meghalaya and West Bengal, it said.

The PMPSE reported presence of FSWs in 642 districts of the country.

With an estimated 2.54 million people living with HIV (PLHIV), India ranks as the country with the second largest population of PLHIV globally, the study said.

The National AIDS and STD Control Programme (NACP) have successfully responded by restricting the epidemic.

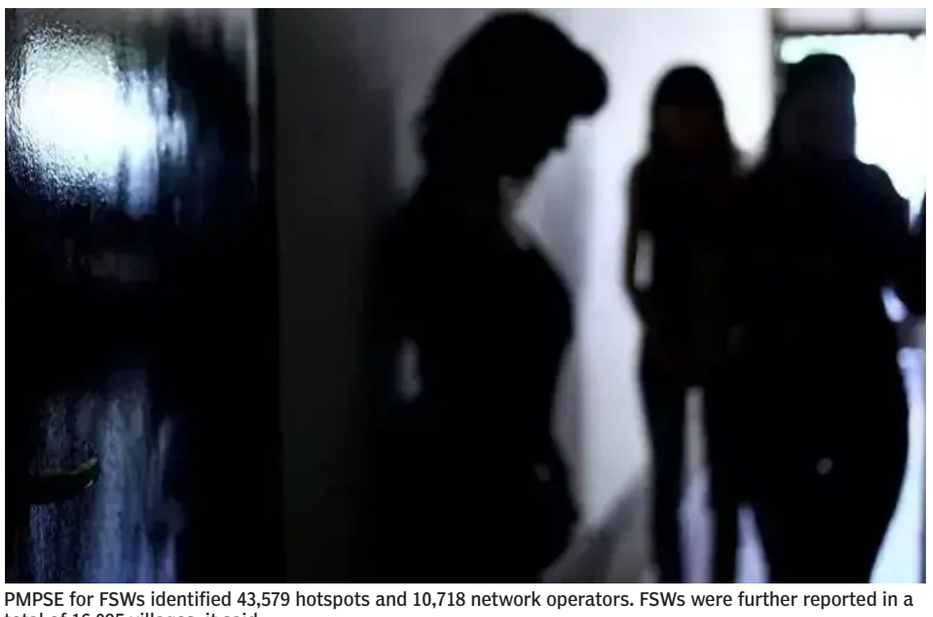
Through its comprehensive and pointed initiatives, nearly 44 per cent reduction in new HIV infections and a remarkable 79 per cent decline in AIDS-related deaths from 2010 to 2023 has been estimated in India.

"Despite the significant success achieved so far, there is no place for complacency and program implementation must continue with equal vigour and energy in the years to come," it said.

HIV prevalence among key populations (KPs) remains significantly higher than the overall adult prevalence, said the study, part of the Surveillance and Epidemiological activities of the National AIDS and STD Control Programme of the central government.

The study further said mapping and population size estimation are pivotal to an evidence-based response to HIV/AIDS in settings with concentrated epidemics.

—PTI



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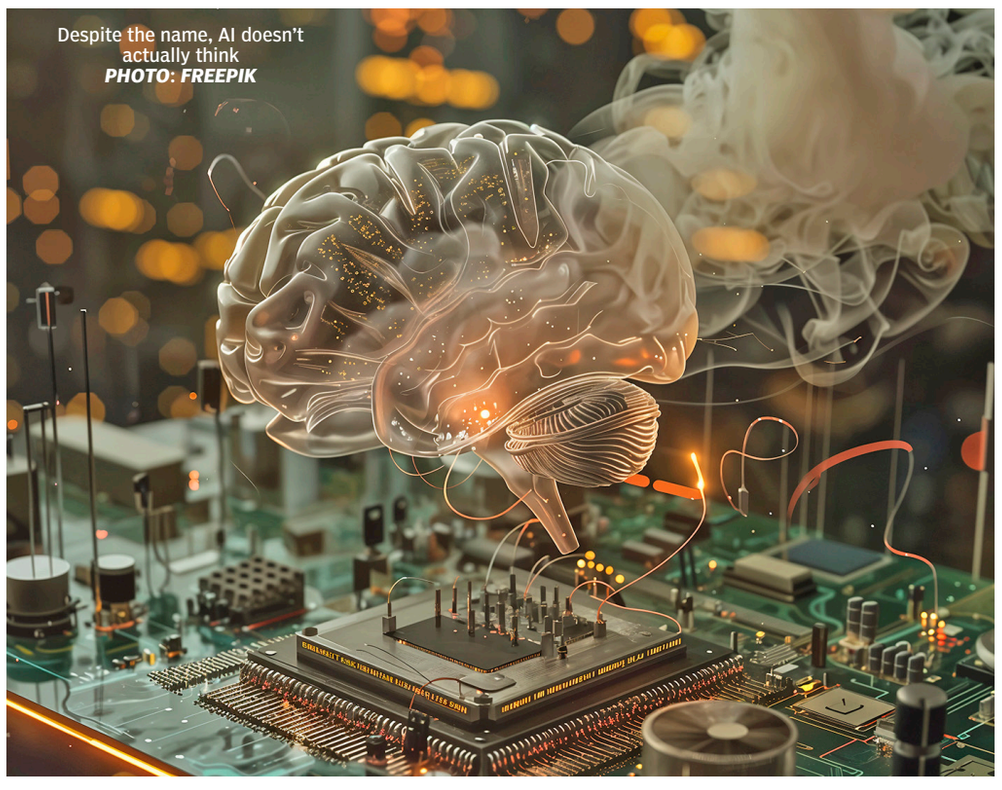
LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Is AI sparking a revolution on reshaping the role of human brain?



Despite the name, AI doesn't actually think

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Artificial Intelligence began as a quest to simulate the human brain. Is it now in the process of transforming the human brain's role in daily life?

The Industrial Revolution diminished the need for manual labour. As someone who researches the application of AI in international business, I can't help but wonder whether it is spurring a cognitive revolution, obviating the need for certain cognitive processes as it reshapes how students, workers and artists write, design and decide.

Graphic designers use AI to quickly create a slate of potential logos for their clients. Marketers test how AI-generated customer profiles will respond to ad campaigns. Software engineers deploy AI coding assistants. Students wield AI to draft essays in record time – and teachers use similar tools to provide feedback.

The economic and cultural implications are profound. What happens to the writer who no longer struggles with the perfect phrase, or the designer who no longer sketches dozens of variations before finding the right one? Will they become increasingly dependent on these cognitive prosthetics, similar to how using GPS diminishes navigation skills? And how can human creativity and critical thinking be preserved in an age of algorithmic abundance?

We've been here before. Today, there's a risk with the automation of thought. Generative AI tempts users to conflate speed with quality, productivity with originality.

The danger is not that AI will fail us, but that people will accept the mediocrity of its outputs as the norm. When everything is fast, frictionless and "good enough," there's the risk of losing the depth, nuance and intellectual richness that define exceptional human work.

Despite the name, AI doesn't actually think. Tools such as ChatGPT, Claude and Gemini process massive volumes of human-created content, often scraped from the internet without context or permission. Their outputs are statistical predictions of what word or pixel is likely to follow based on patterns in data they have processed.

They are, in essence, mirrors that reflect collective human creative output back to users – rearranged and recombined, but fundamentally derivative. And this, in many ways, is precisely why they work so well.

Consider the countless emails people write, the slide decks strategy consultants prepare and the advertisements that suffuse social media feeds. Much of this content follows predictable patterns and established formulas. It has been there before, in one form or the other.

Generative AI excels at producing competent-sounding content — lists, summaries, press releases, advertisements — that bears the signs of human creation without that spark of ingenuity. It thrives in contexts where the demand for originality is low and when "good enough" is, well, good enough. Yet, even in a world of formulaic content, AI can be surprisingly helpful.

However, further analysis revealed a critical trade-off: Reliance on AI systems for brainstorming significantly reduced the diversity of ideas produced, which is a crucial element for creative breakthroughs. The systems tend to converge toward a predictable middle rather than exploring unconventional possibilities at the edges.

I wasn't surprised by these findings. My students and I have found that the outputs of generative AI systems are most closely aligned with the values and world views of wealthy, English-speaking nations. This inherent bias quite naturally constrains the diversity of ideas these systems can generate.

More troubling still, brief interactions with AI systems can subtly reshape how people approach problems and imagine solutions.

What begins as a convenient shortcut risks becoming a self-reinforcing loop of diminishing originality – not because these tools produce objectively poor content, but because they quietly narrow the bandwidth of human creativity itself.

True creativity, innovation and research are not just probabilistic recombinations of past data. They require conceptual leaps, cross-disciplinary thinking and real-world experience. These are qualities AI cannot replicate. It cannot invent the future. It can only remix the past.

What AI generates may satisfy a short-term need: a quick summary, a plausible design, a passable script. But it rarely transforms, and genuine originality risks being drowned in a sea of algorithmic sameness.

The challenge, then, isn't just technological. It's cultural.

The historical parallel with industrialisation offers both caution and hope. Mechanisation displaced many workers but also gave rise to new forms of labour, education and prosperity. Similarly, while AI systems may automate some cognitive tasks, they may also open up new intellectual frontiers by simulating intellectual abilities. In doing so, they may take on creative responsibilities, such as inventing novel processes or developing criteria to evaluate their own outputs.

This transformation is only at its early stages. Each new generation of AI models will produce outputs that once seemed like the purview of science fiction. The responsibility lies with professionals, educators and policymakers to shape this cognitive revolution with intention.

Will it lead to intellectual flourishing or dependency? To a renaissance of human creativity or its gradual obsolescence?

The answer, for now, is up in the air.

—PTI

Syrian govt, Kurds exchange prisoners to ease tensions

ALEPPO, 3 JUNE

Syrian authorities and the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) conducted a significant prisoner exchange in Aleppo on Monday, releasing over 400 detainees. This operation is part of a previously established deal aimed at fostering confidence between Damascus and the SDF, which is backed by the US. According to Mulham al-Akidi, the deputy governor of Aleppo, a total of 470 prisoners from both sides were freed, with the possibility of future releases. The March agreement facilitating the exchange had also helped reduce clashes between the SDF and Turkey-backed forces, as Syria's government struggles to assert control and reconcile various ethnic groups across the war-torn nation. *—PTI*

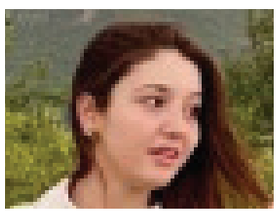


PHOTO: INSTAGRAM

Pak influencer shot dead by fellow social media star

ISLAMABAD, 3 JUNE

Sana Yousaf, a teenage social media influencer, who had more than a million followers across TikTok and Instagram, was shot dead at her residence in Islamabad, officials said on Tuesday, in a third such incident in Pakistan in the last five months. The seventeen-year-old was mercilessly shot dead on Monday at her house in Islamabad's Sector G-13/1, falling under the jurisdiction of the Sumbal police station, police said. Islamabad police arrested an accused, identified as Umar Hayat, also known by his nickname "Kaka", in Faisalabad, Geo TV reported on Tuesday. Hayat, also a TikToker, has confessed to the murder. The accused, who had come to meet Sana at her residence, is said to have fired two shots, resulting in her death. *—PTI*

Mongolia's PM resigns after failed vote of confidence

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

Mongolia's Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene Luvsannamsrai resigned on Tuesday after falling short in a parliamentary vote of confidence. The prime minister secured only 44 votes, far below the 64 required, following public uproar over revelations of extravagant spending by his son. In light of mounting protests, Luvsannamsrai expressed concerns that political instability could undermine the country's fledgling democracy. Acknowledging a misstep in his focus, he admitted he had devoted too much time to major projects while neglecting urgent social matters. The expanding parliament and coalition government have complicated governance. *—PTI*

Xu Qiliang, former Chinese general, dies at 75

BEIJING, 3 JUNE

Xu Qiliang, a former high-ranking general closely associated with Chinese leader Xi Jinping, died at the age of 75, according to the Defence Ministry. A vice commissioner overseeing the People's Liberation Army (PLA) during Xi's early leadership, Xu played a crucial role in transforming China's military strategy. Having joined the PLA during the tumultuous Cultural Revolution, he steadily rose through the ranks without falling victim to the anti-corruption purges affecting many of his peers. His tenure included modernising the military, moving away from Cold War-era weaponry towards advanced stealth fighters and nuclear capabilities. In 2018, Xu met with US Defence Secretary James Mattis, underlining the need for military communication. *—PTI*

Israel guns down 27 more near aid site

Military claims they were firing at suspects

KHAN YOUNIS, 3 JUNE

Palestinian health officials and witnesses say Israeli forces fired on people as they headed toward an aid distribution site on Tuesday, killing at least 27, in the third such incident in three days. The Army said it fired "near a few individual suspects" who left the designated route, approached its forces and ignored warning shots.

The near-daily shootings have come after an Israeli and US-backed foundation established aid distribution points inside Israeli military zones, a system it says is designed to circumvent Hamas. The United Nations has rejected the new system, saying it doesn't address Gaza's mounting hunger crisis and allows Israel to use aid as a weapon.

Hisham Mhanna, spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross, said its field hospital in Rafah received 184 wounded people, 19 of whom were declared dead on arrival and eight more who later died of their wounds. The 27 dead were transferred to Nasser Hospital in the city of Khan Younis.

There were three children and two women among the dead, according to Mohammed Saqr, head of nursing at Nasser Hospital. Hospital Director Atef al-Hout said most of the patients had gunshot wounds.

The Israeli military said it was looking into reports of casualties on Tuesday. It previously said it fired warning shots at suspects who approached its forces early Sunday and Monday, when health officials and witnesses said 34 people were killed.

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, which operates the sites, denied reports of violence around them.

Meanwhile the Israeli military said that three of its soldiers were killed in the Gaza Strip, in what appeared to be the deadliest attack on Israel's forces since it ended a ceasefire with Hamas in March. Israeli media reported that they were killed in an explosion. *—PTI*

Sherin Wafi, center, and her daughter Mira, 4, mourn during the funderal of her husband Hosam Wafi who, according to family members, was killed during an Isaeli strike, in Khan Younis, Southern Gaza Strip **PHOTO: PTI**

Ukraine soldiers fire a canon towards Russian army positions near Kharkiv, Ukraine **PHOTO: PTI**

Man on life support after Aus cops kneel on neck

ADELAIDE, 3 JUNE

A 42-year-old Indian-origin man is on life support with suspected brain damage in Australia after a police officer allegedly knelt on his neck during an arrest, mistaking him for being involved in domestic violence.

Gaurav Kundi, a father of two, was put on life support with suspected brain damage after the encounter in Adelaide.

Kundi and his partner, Amritpal Kaur, were allegedly arguing in public early Thursday, according to Australian media.

A passing patrol reportedly mistook the incident for domestic violence despite Kaur's insistence that Kundi was simply drunk and loud.

Police said Kundi violently resisted the arrest, prompting the escalation.

Kaur filmed the altercation. The clip purported to show Kundi screaming as several officers tried to detain him against a police car.

Kundi reportedly lost consciousness after he was tackled to the ground, with a police officer allegedly driving a knee into his neck - a move that echoes the 2020 George Floyd case in the United States.

Police launched an internal investigation. *—Agencies*

An Indian origin man is on life support after police officer knelt on his neck **PHOTO: FACEBOOK**

Russian missiles and shelling kill 8 in Ukraine

KYIV/ISTANBUL, 3 JUNE

- The attacks come as Russian media published the memorandum Moscow tabled in its peace talks with Ukraine, where it asked Kyiv to end martial law and hold elections

Russia and Ukraine fighting continued along the roughly 1,000-kilometre front line, and both sides have hit each other's territory with deep strikes. Russian forces shelled at Ukraine's southern Kherson region, killing three people and wounding 19 others, including two children, regional officials said Monday.

A missile strike and shelling around the southern city of Zaporizhzhia killed five people and wounded nine others, officials said.

This came as representatives of both sides met Monday for their second round of direct peace talks.

At the negotiating table, Russia presented a memorandum setting out the Kremlin's terms for ending hostilities, the Ukrainian delegation said.

Russian news agencies published the memorandum, which suggested that Ukraine withdraw its forces from the four regions that Russia annexed in September 2022 but never fully captured as a condition for a ceasefire.

It pressed Ukraine to halt its mobilisation efforts, freeze Western arms deliveries, stop redeployment of forces and ban any military presence of third countries on its soil.

Russia also proposes that Ukraine end martial law and hold elections, after which the two could sign a comprehensive peace treaty that would see Ukraine declare its neutral status. *—PTI*

AMID FLUCTUATING TARIFFS

Trump's antics likely to slow US' growth to 1.6%

WASHINGTON, 3 JUNE

US economic growth is forecast to slow to 1.6 per cent this year from 2.8 per cent last year as President Donald Trump's erratic trade wars disrupt global commerce, drive up costs and leave businesses and consumers paralysed by uncertainty.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) forecast Tuesday that the US economy — the world's largest — will slow further to just 1.5 per cent in 2026.

Trump's policies have raised average US tariff rates from around 2.5 per cent when he returned to the White House to 15.4 per cent, highest since 1938, according to the OECD. Tariffs raise costs for consumers and American manufacturers that rely on imported raw materials and components.

World economic growth will slow to just 2.9 per cent this year and stay there in 2026, according to Paris-based OECD, comprising 38 member countries', forecast. It marks a substantial deceleration from growth of 3.3 per cent global growth last year and 3.4 per cent in 2023.

China — the world's second-biggest economy — is forecast to see growth decelerate from 5% last year to 4.7 per cent in 2025 and 4.3 per cent in 2026. Chinese exporters will be hurt by Trump's tariffs, hobbling an economy already weakened by the collapse of the nation's real estate market. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Boulder attacker sought to 'kill all Zionists'

BOULDER, 3 JUNE

A man in Boulder disguised as a gardener who wounded 12 people in an attack on a group holding their weekly demonstration for the release of Israeli hostages in Gaza had planned to kill them all but appeared to have second thoughts, authorities said.

Mohamed Sabry Soliman had 18 Molotov cocktails but threw just two during Sunday's attack where he yelled "Free Palestine," police said. He didn't carry out his full plan "because he got scared and had never hurt anyone before," police said.

He did throw two incendiary devices and expressed no regrets about the attack, they said.

The 45-year-old Soliman planned the attack for more than a year and had desire "to kill all Zionist people" the FBI and authorities said in court papers charging him with a federal hate crime. *—PTI*

Trump backpedals on Iran; won't allow any uranium

President Donald Trump on Monday undercut a proposal that was offered by his special envoy to Iran, saying he will insist that Tehran fully dismantle its nuclear enrichment programme as part of any deal to ease crushing sanctions. "Under our potential agreement — we will not allow any enrichment of uranium!" Trump wrote on social media. The US has repeatedly offered inconsistent public messages about the deal.

Man fakes threat to Trump to get immigrant deported

A Wisconsin man is facing charges of forging a letter threatening President Donald Trump's life in an effort to get another man deported. Prosecutors said that Demetric D Scott was behind the letter. Immigration agents arrested Ramo´n Morales Reyes on 21 May after he dropped his child off at school. However, investigators leaned that he doesn't speak English fluently, and his handwriting didn't match the letters.

Malir Prison in Pakistan, where over 200 inmates used the chaos to dash for freedom **PHOTO: X**

Pak: 200 escape jail amid earthquake evacuations

KARACHI, 3 JUNE

At least 216 prisoners escaped from a Pakistani jail after chaos erupted during a precautionary evacuation following an earthquake in the region, media reports on Tuesday said.

One inmate was killed, and three paramilitary Frontier Corps personnel and one jail staff were injured in the Monday night incident in Karachi's Malir jail, Geo News reported.

According to prison authorities, over 80 prisoners have been recaptured.

Jail Superintendent Arshad Shah said over 600 prisoners were taken out from their barracks during the tremors. "Amid the chaos, 216 managed to flee".

He added that over 135 prisoners remain at large, and search efforts are ongoing.

Law enforcement authorities have launched a joint operation to track down the remaining escapees.

Malir Jail housed over 6,000 inmates at the time of the incident, most of whom were involved in drug-related cases, the report said, quoting prison officials.

Karachi has experienced 16 mild earthquakes since Sunday, according to the Seismic Monitoring Centre of the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). *—PTI*

SWEDEN CALLS TO HALT INT'L ADOPTION FINDING ABUSE

STOCKHOLM, 3 JUNE

A Swedish commission has recommended an immediate end to international adoptions after uncovering a history of abuse and fraud spanning several decades. This investigation reflects growing concerns about ethical practices in international adoptions, particularly in South Korea.

The commission was established in 2021 in response to a report by Dagens Nyheter revealing systemic issues within Sweden's international adoption framework.

Investigators found confirmed cases of child trafficking in each decade from the 1970s to the 2000s, involving countries such as Sri Lanka, Colombia, Poland, and China.

The commission urged a formal apology from the government to adoptees and their families, emphasising the need for awareness of these violations.

Recent actions in other countries have mirrored Sweden's findings, with the Netherlands halting international adoptions, Denmark's agency closing down, and Switzerland issuing apologies for past illegal adoptions. Sweden adopted nearly 10,000 South Korean children since 1960. *—PTI*

NATION ON EDGE

As South Korea votes, here's a look at the top candidates

South Korea voted on Tuesday in snap Presidential elections following the ouster of President Yoon Suk Yeol who faces charges over his short-lived martial law in December.

WHILE KIM SERVED AS YOON'S LABOUR MINISTER, LEE WAS THE DRIVING FORCE BEHIND THE CAMPAIGN TO OUST HIM.

ELECTION DATE: 3 JUNE | RESULT DATE: 4 MAY | TERM OF GOVERNMENT: 5 YEARS

Dropout to human rights lawyer

Poverty forced him to quit school and work as a child labourer at factories where he suffered injuries that left him with an arm disability. He passed the bar exam and became a human rights lawyer. This is his third attempt at Presidency. He earlier served as governor of Gyeonggi province and mayor of Seongnam city.

Criticisms

Conservatives view him as a dangerous populist who intensifies divisions for political gains and backpedals on promises. Criminal cases: 5, including corruption, although the proceedings will likely end if he wins because a sitting President gets immunity. With the Assembly under his party's control, experts worry Lee would have unchecked power.

THE TOP CONTENDERS ARE

LEE JAE-MYUNG 60: Democratic Party candidate.

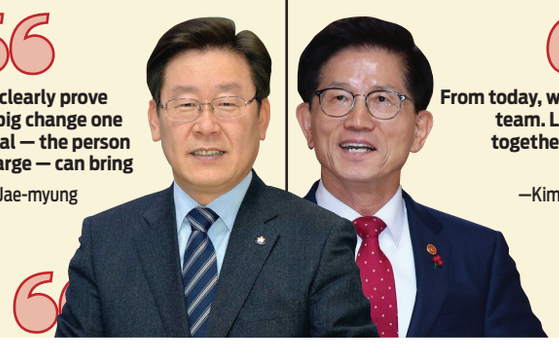
"I will clearly prove how big change one official — the person in charge — can bring"

—Lee Jae-myung

KIM MOON SOO, 73: People Power Party candidate.

"From today, we are one team. Let's fight together and win together"

—Kim Moon Soo



Hardline conservative

Served as Gyeonggi province governor for eight years and a member of the National Assembly for three terms. He worked at factories to promote labour rights and spent 2.5 years in prison for anti-government activities. He gained popularity for solely defying an order for all Cabinet members to stand and bow at the Assembly in apology over Yoon's decree.

He promises to build a greater missile defence system and win a stronger US security commitment to cope with North Korea's rising Nuclear threat. He vows to reform anti-business regulations.

Backlash

Dubbed a traitor after he switched ideology in 1994 and joined a conservative party. Accused of abusing power in 2011. Attempted to rewrite history books to favour Japan.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Gold price up by Rs 70 to Rs 99,000/10g

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Gold prices gained Rs 70 to Rs 99,000 per 10g in the national capital on Tuesday, supported by rupee depreciation, according to the All India Sarafa Association. The precious metal of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 200 to Rs 98,600 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). Silver prices went up by Rs 100 to Rs 1,00,200 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Tuesday. The rupee declined 21 paise to settle at 85.60 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, weighed down by a firm American currency and outflow of foreign funds. Meanwhile, spot gold in the global markets fell by USD 25.22 per ounce or 0.75 per cent to USD 3,356.41 per ounce. —*PTI*

Rupee declines by 21P to 85.60 against USD

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The rupee declined 21 paise to settle at 85.60 (provisional) against the US dollar on Tuesday, weighed down by a firm American currency and outflow of foreign funds. According to forex traders, the local unit remained under pressure tracking negative domestic equity markets amid geopolitical uncertainties. Investors are also awaiting cues from the Reserve Bank's monetary policy announcements. RBI's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) will begin deliberations on its bi-monthly policy on Wednesday and the outcome is scheduled to be announced on 6 June. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.55 and moved between the high of 85.44 and a low of 85.60 against the greenback during the day. On Monday, the rupee appreciated 16 paise to settle at 85.39 against the dollar.—*PTI*

L&T bags major deals from Rajasthan govt

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Infrastructure giant Larsen & Toubro (L&T) has secured "significant" contracts—valued between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 2,500 crore—from the Rajasthan government. The orders were awarded to L&T's Water and Effluent Treatment business by the state's Public Health Engineering Department. One project, under the Rajasthan Rural Water Supply and Fluorosis Mitigation Project (Phase II), includes laying 5,251 km of pipelines, building 38 ground-level reservoirs , 132 overhead service reservoirs, and 20 pump houses. It will serve 285 villages and the towns of Surajgarh and Udaipurwati in Jhunjhunu. Another project involves rehabilitating the water supply system in Ajmer district's Kekri-Sarwar sector, including 43km of new transmission pipelines. —*PTI*

Biocon gets CDSCO nod for generic diabetes medicine

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Biotech firm Biocon on Tuesday said it has received approval from the government authorities for a generic diabetes medication. The company has received approval for its Liraglutide drug substance and its wholly-owned subsidiary Biocon Pharma has received approval for its Liraglutide drug product, from the Drugs Controller General of India (CDSCO). The approval is for the generic version of Victoza, indicated for the treatment of insufficiently controlled Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus in adults, adolescents and children aged 10 years and above, as an adjunct to diet and exercise, the company said in a regulatory filing. India has one of the highest number of people with diabetes globally, with estimates exceeding 77 million cases, and expected to rise further, he added.—*PTI*

Mkts extend losses for 3rd day amid broad sell-off

Sensex tanks by 636.24 pts, Nifty plunges by 174.10 pts

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

Equity benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty tumbled nearly 1 per cent on Tuesday, weighed down by a widespread selloff amid foreign fund outflows and growing geopolitical uncertainties.

Domestic markets stayed on the back foot for the third straight session as investors offloaded energy, finance and IT stocks, traders said.

In a volatile trading session, the 30-share BSE index tanked 636.24 points or 0.78 per cent to settle at 80,737.51. During the day, it dropped 798.66 points or 0.98 per cent to 80,575.09.

The NSE Nifty plunged 174.10 points or 0.70 per cent to 24,542.50.

As many as 2,266 stocks declined, while 1,731 advanced and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE.

"The domestic market remained in negative terrain amid mixed global cues, geopolitical issues and a volatile currency market led by a weak USD. Profit-booking is evident across sectors, except for real estate stocks, supported by expectations of an interest rate cut by the RBI.

From the Sensex firms, Adani Ports declined 2.42 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Eternal, IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Tata Consultancy Services and UltraTech Cement were among the biggest laggards.

Mahindra & Mahindra emerged as the only gainer in the pack.

Adani Group's 11 listed companies ended lower.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.52 per cent, while the smallcap index dipped 0.07 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, power dropped 1.50 per cent, utilities (1.42 per cent), bankex (0.89 per cent), energy (0.88 per cent), capital goods (0.87 per cent), financial services (0.80 per cent) and teck (0.68 per cent).

On the other hand, commodities and realty were the gainers.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) offloaded equities worth Rs 2,589.47 crore on Monday, according to exchange data.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.28 per cent to USD 64.81 a barrel. – *PTI*

As many as 2,266 stocks declined, while 1,731 advanced and 147 remained unchanged on the BSE **PHOTO: PTI**

- Adani Ports declined 2.42 per cent. Bajaj Finserv, Bajaj Finance, Power Grid, Eternal, IndusInd Bank, Maruti, Tata Consultancy Services and UltraTech Cement were among the biggest laggards.

Adani group shares drop by nearly 3%

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Adani Group stocks declined on Tuesday morning trade, with Adani Ports and Adani Enterprises falling nearly 3 per cent each. Adani Group on Monday said it does not handle any cargo coming from Iran or any Iranian-owned ship at any of its ports, as it denied any deliberate engagement in sanctions evasion.

In a stock exchange filing, the group said reports of links between any of its entities and Iranian LPG are "baseless and mischievous". Shares of Adani Ports dropped 2.72 per cent, Adani Enterprises declined 2.63 per cent, Adani Total Gas went lower by 2.10 per cent and Adani Green Energy fell 2 per cent . – *PTI*

'AMERICA FIRST'

Prez Trump deeply admires, respects India: Lutnick

WASHINGTON/ PARIS/ MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The core population of India has drive and ambition and that's why its economy will always continue to thrive, US Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick has said, underlining that President Donald Trump deeply admires and respects India and the two countries are going to have a "great relationship together."

India has one of the most extraordinary economies, Lutnick said in his keynote address at the eighth edition of US-India Strategic Partnership Forum Leadership Summit here on Monday. "The key that makes an extraordinary economy is the determination of the people. " he said.

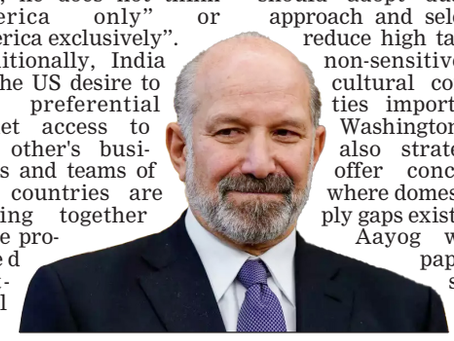
He added, while President Trump thinks "America first", he does not think "America only" or "America exclusively".

Additionally, India and the US desire to give preferential market access to each other's businesses and teams of both countries are working together on the proposed bilateral trade agreement, Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has said.

In February, US and India announced plans to negotiate first tranche or phase of a mutually beneficial, multi-sector Bilateral Trade Agreement by fall of 2025. He is on an official visit to hold talks with French leaders and business representatives to boost trade & investments.

Meanwhile, US offers an "abundance" of stability and transparency, which makes world's largest economy an attractive investment destination for the Aditya Birla Group, a top official from Indian conglomerate has said. Kumar Mangalam Birla said the group chaired by him has invested USD 15 billion in US over the last 17 years.

In the aftermath of "reciprocal tariffs" by US, India should adopt dual-track approach and selectively reduce high tariffs on non-sensitive agricultural commodities imports from Washington, while also strategically offer concessions where domestic supply gaps exist, a NITI Aayog working paper has said. – *PTI*



BMC cancels plan for Turkish robotic lifebuoys

MUMBAI, 3 JUNE

The Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) has abandoned its plan to procure Turkish-made robotic lifebuoys intended for use on several beaches, officials confirmed on Monday.

This decision follows a wave of criticism over Turkey's support for Pakistan during recent military tensions between India and its neighbour.

The remotely-operated rescue devices, designed to assist lifeguards in drowning prevention, were set for deployment at Girgaum Chowpatty, Shivaji Park Dadar, Juhu, Versova, Aksa, and Gorai beaches.

Each robotic lifebuoy featured dual water jets, a rechargeable battery with a capacity of 10,000 mAh, and could carry up to 200 kg. – *PTI*

India's Russian oil imports at 10-month high

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India's imports of Russian crude oil surged to a ten-month high of 1.96 million barrels per day in May, accounting for over 38 per cent of total crude supplies, as reported by ship-tracking data from Kpler. The surge is largely attributed to significant discounts on Russian oil compared to global benchmarks.

As the world's third-largest oil importer, India sourced around 5.1 million barrels of crude oil, with Iraq and Saudi Arabia following as major suppliers, providing 1.2 million and 6,15,000 barrels per day, respectively. US contributed 2,80,000 barrels, highlighting India's strategy to diversify its import sources amid geopolitical uncertainties.

Sumit Ritolia, Lead Research Analyst at Kpler, noted that India's crude import profile underscores its price-sensitive approach and diversified sourcing strategy, with Russian volumes remaining high despite external pressures. Following the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, India's imports of Russian oil jumped from less than 1 per cent to 40–44 per cent, driven by competitive pricing.

In May, Urals crude averaged around USD 50 per barrel, significantly cheaper than West African and Middle Eastern grades. – *PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

CLOUD-FIRST DIGITAL CORE

Virgin Atlantic, TCS partner to modernise airline tech with AI

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Virgin Atlantic has announced a seven-year partnership with Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) focused on modernising the airline's core technology systems. This collaboration, which expands their two-decade relationship, aims to enhance customer and crew experiences through AI-led solutions, providing personalised and sustainable travel options.

The new agreement will see TCS implement a cloud-first, AI-powered digital core, improving business agility and operational resilience. In addition, a state-of-the-art technology command centre, co-developed with TCS, will be established to offer real-time operational insights, facilitating better decision-making and streamlining technology operations.

Oli Byers, Chief Financial Officer of Virgin Atlantic, emphasised the importance of technology in delivering exceptional customer experiences as the airline aspires to become "the most loved travel company."

TCS's proprietary solutions, including TCS Cognix and TCS AI WisdomNext, will further drive transformation, enhance service delivery, and support Virgin Atlantic's sustainable growth objectives.

Amit Kapur, Country Head for TCS in the UK and Ireland, reiterated the significance of their long-standing partnership, asserting that combining expertise in aviation with AI and data capabilities will reshape the future of travel for Virgin Atlantic. – *PTI*

The new agreement will see TCS implement a cloud-first, AI-powered digital core, improving business agility and operational resilience **PHOTO: X**

New builder firms to have stable growth

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Emerging diversified construction firms in India are forecasted to experience stable growth in the fiscal year 2025-26, according to Crisil Ratings. The report anticipates revenue increases of 9-11 per cent, supported by healthy order books and efficient project executions.

Despite these projections, challenges such as the inability to pass on costs from fluctuating commodity prices and heightened competition may constrain operating margins to 10-11 per cent. While working capital requirements are set to rise, better cash flow management is expected to mitigate reliance on bank borrowings.

The analysis conducted on 200 emerging construction firms, which collectively earned around Rs 1 lakh crore last fiscal year, highlights the significant role of government infrastructure initiatives in propelling growth within the sector. The diversity of their order books is likely to support a continued increase in revenue; however, profit margins are projected to remain flat as competition intensifies.

Crisil Ratings Senior Director Rahul Guha noted that strong cash flows would help maintain manageable leverage levels, thus bolstering the credit profiles of these companies as they undertake necessary capital expenditures for equipment purchase while navigating a challenging market landscape. – *PTI*

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Goyal talks Indian shipping scope with Singapore

PARIS, 3 JUNE

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal met Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister Gan Kim Yong on Tuesday to explore ways to deepen economic ties, particularly in the shipping sector. Goyal is currently on an official visit to France to promote trade and investment between India and Europe.

In a post on X, Goyal said the meeting focused on enhancing bilateral trade and investment, while also highlighting the vast potential of India's maritime industry. Discussions on shipping hold significance as India seeks to reduce freight costs and improve trade resilience, especially in light of recent disruptions such as the Red Sea crisis.

The Union Budget recently proposed a Maritime Development Fund (MDF) to support India's shipping sector through equity and debt financing. – *PTI*

Revenue Secy to DRI: Use tech to tackle dark web

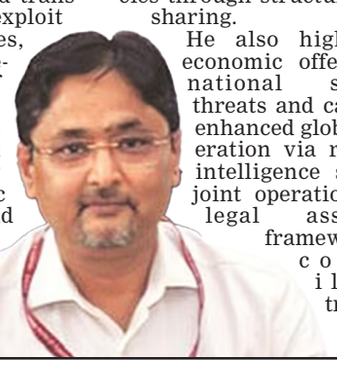
NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

Revenue Secretary Arvind Shrivastava has urged the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) to adopt advanced technological tools to tackle emerging threats from disguised supply chains, cross-border e-commerce, and the dark web. Speaking at the inauguration of the DRI's new headquarters, Shrivastava said transnational syndicates exploit opaque trade routes, requiring enforcement to stay ahead of concealment tactics.

He called on DRI to focus on risks linked to cryptocurrency misuse, synthetic drug trafficking, and digital platforms. He emphasised the importance of data-driven intelligence, urging innovation in enforcement to match criminal innovation.

In 2024, the DRI seized 1,382kg of gold, 62kg of heroin, 85kg of cocaine, over 10,000kg of ganja, and more than 600kg of synthetic drugs including ketamine and ecstasy. Shrivastava stressed the need for integrated intelligence across Customs, GST, Income Tax, and other agencies through structured data sharing.

He also highlighted economic offences as national security threats and called for enhanced global cooperation via real-time intelligence sharing, joint operations, and legal assistance frameworks to combat illicit trade. – *PTI*



Optimistic of India-EU trade pact: French Min

PARIS, 3 JUNE

France on Tuesday expressed hope that the proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between India and the European Union (EU) would be concluded in coming weeks or months.

French minister of foreign trade Laurent Saint-Martin said it is important to show the world that the two sides believe in free trade and not trade wars. He also said that the defence sector is one of the major success stories in India-France bilateral ties."So let's make this defence sector a role model, an example for other sectors," minister said. European Union is a grouping of 27 nations, including France and Germany.

Goyal is on an official visit here. He is leading an over 50-member delegation. – *PTI*

37% NEGOTIATED HIKES

India's job market sees high mobility, new role seekers

NEW DELHI, 3 JUNE

India's job market is witnessing high mobility with a significant percentage of professionals actively seeking new roles, many are now negotiating for better pay within their current organisations, says a survey.

The latest Talent Trends India 2025 report by Michael Page reveals that 62 per cent of professionals have negotiated a raise this year, and 37 per cent succeeded -- signalling a shift toward internal advancement. The rate of successful salary increases has risen from 32 per cent last year to 37 per cent this year. The report is based on insights from nearly 3,000 professionals across the country. According to the report, professionals are increasingly prioritising purpose, ethics, and flexibility in an organisation.

The report further highlighted that the adoption of GenAI tools has increased significantly in Indian organisations. With 64 per cent of professionals using GenAI tools like ChatGPT and Microsoft Copilot, India is ahead of global adoption curves. However, only 31 per cent feel well-prepared by their employers to use these tools effectively, the report said. – *PTI*

Kohli lifts IPL title: No. 18 greets destiny in 18th year

Virat Kohli has been the face of RCB since the IPL's inception in 2008

Former RCB stalwarts Chris Gayle and AB de Billiers lift the trophy with Virat Kohli; RCB fans celebrate finals at BGS Playground in Vijayanagar, Bengaluru *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

AHMEDABAD, 3 JUNE

At 11.25 pm on a warm Ahmedabad night, Virat Kohli's dream finally came true. After 18 long years, the Royal Challengers Bengaluru clinched their maiden IPL title — and with it, their No. 18 met destiny in the 18th season.

Kohli, the face of RCB since the IPL's inception in 2008, was visibly overwhelmed. As Josh Hazlewood de-fended 29 runs in the final over to seal the victory, Kohli broke down, covering his tear-filled face with his palms. Teammates rushed to embrace the man who had given so much to this franchise, through soaring highs and painful lows.

The Kohli-RCB story began as early as 2008, when a chubby, brash 19-year-old from Delhi entered a dressing room of seasoned internationals like Rahul Dravid, Anil Kumble, and Jacques Kallis. Despite the contrast, RCB placed their trust in him — and it was former owner Vijay Mallya who allowed Kohli the space to evolve, both as a cricketer and a leader.

In 2011, RCB handed captaincy to the 22-year-old Kohli, and he remained at the helm for 12 seasons and 143 matches — an unmatched tenure without a trophy, until now. His intensity, charisma,

A teary-eyed Virat Kohli *PHOTO: PTI*

and connection with Bengaluru's fans steadily transformed him into the heartbeat of the franchise.

Unlike the instant bond MS Dhoni formed with Chennai Super Kings, Kohli's relationship with Bengaluru brewed slowly, like aged wine. It wasn't always warm — admired, often debated — but always passionate. Over time, he became the franchise's most recognisable face, its voice, its soul.

Even without a title, Kohli never distanced himself from the franchise. While rivals like Mumbai Indians and CSK stacked up trophies, Kohli stayed committed to RCB. In a recent podcast, he had said, "Being with RCB is never going to go away... the love I've received from fans, no silverware can come close to that."

Yet deep inside, the desire to hold the trophy never faded.

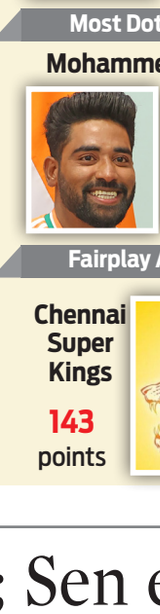
And now it's real. —*PTI*

And the winners are...

Orange Cap: Sai Sudharsan, GT: **759** runs

Purple Cap: Prasidh Krishna, GT: **25** wickets

Emerging Player



Sai Surdashan GT: age 23

Super Striker

Vaibhav Suryavanshi, RR: SR **206.55**

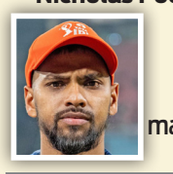
Most Valuable Player

Suryakumar Yadav

MI; **320.5** points

Most Sixes

Nicholas Pooran



LSG; **40** maximums

Most Dot Balls

Mohammed Siraj

GT: **151** dots

Fairplay Award

Chennai Super Kings **143** points

PHOTO: X

Honda becomes founding partner for LA28 Olympics

LOS ANGELES, 3 JUNE

The LA28 Olympic Organising Committee has signed Honda as a "founding partner," marking the sixth new sponsor this year and the first tier-one sponsor since 2021. Though financial terms were undisclosed, top-level sponsorships typically begin around $200 million. The deal secures the vital automotive category for LA28, following Toyota's decision not to renew after 2024. Honda joins Delta and Comcast as top-tier sponsors. John Slusher, CEO of U.S. Olympic and Paralympic Properties, revealed the deal pushes sponsorship sales beyond $1.5 billion, with a $2.5 billion target. Honda will also supply a vehicle fleet to transport athletes across Southern California. —*PTI*

India aim for hat-trick of wins against Thailand

PATHUM THANI, 3 JUNE

The Indian football team will seek a third straight win against Thailand when the two Asian rivals clash in an international friendly at the Thammasat Stadium on Wednesday. India, ranked 127th in the FIFA rankings, will draw inspiration from their 4-1 win at the 2019 AFC Asian Cup and a 1-0 victory at the King's Cup on Thai soil the same year. Leading the charge once again will be Sunil Chhetri, who scored twice in that famous Asian Cup win. "That game showed what we can achieve on a good day. Thailand were stronger on paper, but we dominated," said Chhetri, now 40, ahead of the match. India head coach Manolo Marquez cautioned against comparisons with past encounters. —*PTI*

GUKESH BEATS ERIGAISI

Gukesh was on the defensive, but finally managed to up his game, tying down Erigaisi in time trouble *PHOTO: PTI*

STAVANGER, 3 JUNE

Reigning world champion D Gukesh battled past a difficult position to defeat compatriot Arjun Erigaisi for the first time in classical chess, claiming sole second place after Round 7 of the Norway Chess tournament.

The 19-year-old, playing with white, showed immense resilience for his second straight classical win, following a stunning victory over Magnus Carlsen. The win took Gukesh to 11.5 points, ahead of Carlsen (11) and just behind leader Fabiano Caruana (12.5), who beat China's Wei Yi.

This was Gukesh's maiden victory over Erigaisi in three classical attempts. Erigaisi had previously bested him in Round 2 of this event and at Tata Steel earlier this year. With three rounds to go in the elite six-player double round-robin, the title race remains wide open.

Gukesh was on the back foot for over three hours before capitalising on Erigaisi's time trouble. "I was just slowly getting outplayed... but in the time scrambles, things happen," he said post-match.

Coach Grzegorz Gajewski admitted it wasn't Gukesh's best start but praised his fighting spirit and precision. Carlsen defeated Hikaru Nakamura in Armageddon after a short 21-move draw to move to third. Nakamura sits fourth with 8.5 points, followed by Erigaisi (7.5) and Wei Yi (6.5). —*PTI*

Sindhu advances at Indonesia Open; Sen exits

JAKARTA, 3 JUNE

PV Sindhu fought her way into the second round of the Indonesia Open Super 1000, while fellow Indians Lakshya Sen and HS Prannoy crashed out in the first round.

Sindhu edged out long-time rival Nozomi Okuhara 22-20, 21-23, 21-15 in a gritty 79-minute match. "It's important to get that first win; it gives me confidence," said the two-time Olympic medallist, who had been struggling with early exits recently.

Sindhu held match points in the second game but faltered before sealing victory in the decider. She now faces sixth seed Pornpawee Chochuwong of Thailand in the round of 16.

- Sen, returning from a back injury, showed resilience against world No. 2 Shi Yu Qi, saving a match point to take the second game, but ultimately lost 11-21, 22-20, 15-21.

Sen, returning from a back injury, showed resilience against world No. 2 Shi Yu Qi, saving a match point to take the second game, but ultimately lost 11-21, 22-20, 15-21. Prannoy, meanwhile, went down 17-21, 18-21 to Indonesia's Alwi Farhan.

Among other Indian women, Malvika Bansod retired injured while leading against Putri Kusuma Wardani after slipping and clutching her knee. Anupama Upadhyaya lost to Korea's Kim Ga Eun 15-21, 9-21, while Rakshitha Ramraj was beaten by Thailand's Supanida Katethong 21-14, 15-21, 12-21.

Reflecting on her performance, Sindhu noted the evolving nature of women's badminton. "Earlier it was more attack-focused, now rallies are longer, and defence stronger," she said. Admitting fitness is still a work in progress, she added, "I need to be injury-free and focus on improving my skills." — *PTI*

Williamson declines central contract, to miss Zimbabwe tests

WELLINGTON, 3 JUNE

Former New Zealand captain Kane Williamson has once again turned down a central contract with New Zealand Cricket (NZC), making him unlikely to feature in the Black Caps' two-Test tour of Zimbabwe in July–August.

As in 2024, Williamson has opted for a casual playing arrangement to keep his schedule open for T20 leagues. Despite not being contracted last year, he played nine of New Zealand's 13 Tests, scoring over 1,000 runs.

NZC announced 20 central contracts on Tuesday, with Williamson, Devon Conway, Finn Allen, Tim Seifert, and Lockie Ferguson notably absent due to overseas T20 commitments. Williamson, currently playing for Middlesex in the County Championship and T20 Blast, is also set to appear for London Spirit in The Hundred. Four players earned contracts for the first time: Muhammad Abbas, Zak Foulkes, Mitch Hay, and Adi Ashok, reflecting a generational shift following Tim Southee's retirement and the omissions of Ish Sodhi, and Ajaz Patel. —*PTI*

Neeraj Chopra Classic rescheduled for 5 July in B'luru

BENGALURU, 3 JUNE

The inaugural Neeraj Chopra Classic, India's first-ever international javelin competition, will now be held on 5 July at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium in Bengaluru, organisers confirmed on Tuesday. Originally scheduled for 24 May in Panchkula, the event was postponed due to the India-Pakistan military conflict.

Organised by double Olympic medallist Neeraj Chopra in collaboration with JSW Sports and sanctioned by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI), the 12-man field will feature seven global stars and five Indian throwers, including Chopra himself. Top international names include Anderson Peters (Grenada), Thomas Röhler (Germany), Julius Yego (Kenya), Curtis Thompson (USA), Genki Dean (Japan), Rumesh Pathirage (Sri Lanka), and Luiz Mauricio da Silva (Brazil). India will be represented by Sachin Yadav, Kishore Jena, Rohit Yadav, and Sahil Silwal. The event, granted Category A status by World Athletics, was moved from Panchkula due to lighting issues affecting live broadcast capability. Described as Chopra's "dream project", it was delayed following the Pahalgam terror attack.

Tickets range from Rs 199 to Rs 9,999. —*PTI*

FRENCH OPEN

Djokovic no underdog against Zverev in quarterfinal clash

PARIS, 3 JUNE

Despite recent doubts about his form, Novak Djokovic has demonstrated why he remains one of tennis's greats, heading into his French Open quarterfinal against No. 3 seed Alexander Zverev on Wednesday.

The 38-year-old Serb, holder of 24 Grand Slam titles and a record 428 weeks at No. 1, was coming off a poor run just over a month ago. After three consecutive losses, including an 0-2 start on red clay, Djokovic entered the Geneva Open seeking confidence. Since winning that title, he is undefeated, boasting an 8-0 streak and yet to drop a set in Paris.

"It happens when you lose a couple of matches and doubt creeps in. I'm glad it all turned out perfect for me," Djokovic said.

Djokovic and Zverev, 28, are familiar foes, meeting 13 times previously with Djokovic leading 8-5. Their last encounter was in January's Australian Open semifinals, which Djokovic retired from due to injury. The German, who considers Djokovic a mentor, called playing him "a privilege."

Their only previous Paris meeting was in 2019, when Djokovic won in three sets.

When asked if Djokovic, seeded sixth, could be a dark horse, Zverev dismissed the idea: "He's won 24 Grand Slams. He definitely knows how to play big matches. There's no doubt about that."

Wednesday's other quarterfinal features top seed Jannik Sinner against unseeded Alexander Bublik, the first Kazakh man to reach a Grand Slam quarterfinal. Tuesday's matches included defending champion Carlos Alcaraz facing Tommy Paul, and Lorenzo Musetti against Frances Tiafoe.

Despite early setbacks this season, Djokovic remains a formidable contender at Roland-Garros, a tournament he has won three times and where he is the only player to have beaten Rafael Nadal more than once. —*PTI*